

# JainDigest

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A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



**JAINA Conventions - Symbols of Unity**

## JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the  
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### **On the Cover:**

#### **JAINA Conventions - Symbols of Unity**

The cover shows logos of the few past JAINA Conventions held in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021. Each logo is a symbol that represents the theme of that specific convention. However, all the logos represent the purpose of the conventions – to unite Jains of all sects.

### **Disclosure**

*The Editorial Team endeavors to publish all the materials that are submitted but reserves the right to reduce, revise, reject, or edit any article, letter, or abstract for clarity, space, or policy reasons. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Team. These articles are published with the authors names. The articles written or published by the Editorial Team are published as a joint contribution of the entire Editorial Team, and not necessarily represent the views of JAINA*



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## Editor's Note

Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

With blessings of Bhagwan and support & encouragement from all of you, our Editorial Team has now completed 6 years of service to the Jain community. Thanks to JAINA officials for their valuable guidance and support. I thank all our editors, advisors and writers for their hard work and commitment to bringing you high quality content. In order to acknowledge their efforts and let you know more about them, we are including their bios and pictures in this issue. They have also shared their experience in working as a volunteer in this team.

The main theme of this issue of Jain Digest is the 2021 Virtual JAINA Convention. In many ways this year's convention was very unique and a really memorable event. With a very enthusiastic support and hard work by hundreds of volunteers, JAINA officials were able to organize an amazingly successful convention that exceeded many people's expectations around the world. The collaboration, cooperation and resiliency exhibited by the members of all convention committees was exceptional; thus showing that the theme "Jainism: A Resilient Path to Peace" was not an empty promise, but something that can be implemented by those willing to do so.

Hence our editorial team feels happy and honored to bring you this special issue about the convention. However, the focus of this issue is not on reporting about the various events that happened during the convention. Instead, we have chosen to show you what happens behind the scenes. From the various committees that were instrumental in making this convention successful, we have chosen a few that had to deal with some unique challenges of planning for a first virtual and global convention. Our sincere apologies to those committees that we were not able to highlight in this issue of the magazine.

We start the convention committee coverage with the Kids Club committee led by Maulee Shah. Read about her challenges in arranging the variety of events which shows the team's creativity and understanding of how to keep the kids engaged in a virtual environment. Next is an article by Shweta Daftary about Jain Academic Bowl in which she explains how the highly inspired team of volunteers enthusiastically took upon the challenges of working with 220 participants and 40 coaches from 5 countries.

This is followed by how the overall convention event and speaker session planning was conducted in an article by Manish Mehta. It covers various dilemmas faced by the committee and shows how satisfactory results can be achieved with open and regular communication. Next is the article by Jayesh Sanghvi about the Jains Got Talent committee. It highlights the committee's skill in attracting talents from the Jain community and then selecting the best of the best to showcase on the world stage.

Of all the committees, one that stands out the most is the Multimedia and Technology committee. Learn about the tremendous amount of work the team had to do with just one goal – how to provide attendees the best convention experience in a virtual environment. The article is an enlightening conversation with Narendra Maniar and Sapan Doshi.

In the next article written by Vipul Shah, we cover the efforts done by the Marketing and Public Relations teams to create awareness about this one-of-a-kind convention among the prospective attendees and then keeping them informed during the convention. This is followed by an article about the most appreciated event – the virtual Tirth Yatra. Jigar Shah explains work that took place behind the scenes.

Next comes an interview with Jayana Shah about the Cultural Committee. Read about their out-of-the-box thinking and willingness to work with several participants of all ages around the world in order to provide you with quality entertainment. The last article is by our emcee Savita Jain who compares her experience in fulfilling her role in the 2021 virtual environment with the in-person convention in 2019.

We have also included some of the responses received in the JAINA Convention survey about which sessions touched your heart. Many thanks to those who provided their feedback. My sincere thanks to all authors for their timely submissions and our editorial team for their diligence in editing the articles. Thanks to Jayanaben Shah for designing the wonderful cover page, overall design of the magazine and all the hard work in compiling the survey responses in an appealing format.

We also have a few articles on that are not convention related. Hope you enjoy reading them as well. Please write to us at [jaindigestpublication@gmail.com](mailto:jaindigestpublication@gmail.com) if you would like to join our editorial team or write an article for our next issue which will be published in February 2022. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,  
Dilip Parekh



## JAINA President's Message

Jai Jinendra!

I hope you and your loved ones are in sukh shata and have celebrated Paryushan and Das Lakshana with much devotion. This was the second year in a row we celebrated Mahaparva from our home. The positive things are we did less jiv hinsa by restricting our movement, spent time with our loved ones, found ways to connect with the community at a global level, and probably understanding the true meaning of Jain Dharma.

On behalf of JAINA EC and BOD, if we have knowingly or unknowingly hurt you, we seek your forgiveness. Michhami Dukkadam!

The last four months have been eventful for JAINA. Here is the summary of all beautiful events that took place and how JAINA supported the community through thoughtful initiatives.

### June 2021

1) Under the "Know Your JAINA" initiative, JAINA organized presentations by Ahimsak Eco-Vegan Committee, Jain Academic Liaison Committee and Jain Center Liaison Committee meeting with the community members.



2) JAINA brought 35 musicians and 8 singers to present the famous songs from movies of Bollywood Legend, Rajesh Khanna on Laaveo Platform to raise funds to support hospitals in India with Oxygen Generation Plants for a long-term solution to Oxygen problems. With over 2000 attendees, the event was very successful. JAINA collected \$1.4M

(\$700,000 Sponsors & \$ 700,000 matching) will be used to install a total of 14 Oxygen Plants in the hospitals to help people in India, not only for COVID but for many years in the future.



3) JAINA's Jain Population Survey Committee launched a single-page online population survey to determine Jain population count in North America. This survey also helps JAINA to know who would like to receive JAINA Calendar and JAINA Newsletter.

4) This year, the **Sarva Mangal Family Trust (Manubhai and Rikaben Shah)** of Los Angeles instituted and sponsored a total of 7 **Karuna Ratna** (Compassion Jewel) & **Karuna Veer** (Compassion Champion) Awards.

This project was established for the first time during 2021 JAINA Convention for Individuals living in North America (the USA and Canada), who had contributed significantly to compassionate activities for social causes, i.e. "Jains for Humanity", to be recognized during the JAINA Virtual Convention. The appointed judges reviewed all the applications and declared winners in three age categories as given below.

The Karuna Ratna Awards are of \$10,000 and the Karuna Veer Awards are of \$5,000. The award amount is donated to a charity of winner's choice.

#### **Age 50 and above:**

**Karuna Ratna - Dr. Nitin Shah**

(Jain Center of Los Angeles)

**Karuna Veer 1 - Ramesh A. Shah**

(Jain Center of Southern California)

**Karuna Veer 2 - Ramesh P. Shah**

(Jain Center of Greater Cleveland)

**Karuna Veer 3 - Kiran Chirag Shah**

(Jain Center of Phoenix)

#### **Age 30 to 50:**

**Karuna Ratna - Shaleen and Shilpi Shah**

(Jain Samaj of Colorado)

**Karuna Veer - Paavan H. Shah**

(Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago)

#### **Age under 30:**

**Karuna Ratna - Parima Shah**

(Jain Society of San Diego)

5) **Manubhai and Rikaben Shah** were recognized as part of the **2021 In diaspora Philanthropy Leaders List – 100** (and 30 honorees from the USA) who are the top leaders in philanthropy from countries around the globe and who are leading the largest global companies—CEOs, Presidents, or Chairpersons of the Board of Directors.



6) During the 2021 Convention, JAINA presented Awards in 6 different categories. Award categories included Presidential, Special Appreciation, Karuna Ratna & Karuna Veer, JAINA Adult Recognition, JAINA Ratna, and JAINA Youth Recognition. Total of 37 individuals and 3 organizations received awards for their selfless contribution to JAINA, Jain Community, and to humanitarian activities globally. JAINA also presented the VRG Essay Contest Winners Award to 3 individuals.

## July 2021



1) JAINA created history by making the **first-ever virtual and global JAINA Convention 2021** where **nearly 15,000 attendees, ages 3 to 93 from 23 countries gathered virtually**. 70+ spiritual speakers delivered inspiring discourses. 300+ hours of session programming were delivered over the six days. While celebrating the Jain religion in the 21st century on

such a global scale brought tears of joy to many, this convention has also succeeded in extending the JAINA platform to the global level to the countries beyond North America!

2) After the successful Convention 2021, JAINA received many emails from the community saying they had not been able to watch all the convention events. Hence, JAINA Technology team now has made videos of all the convention events available at [www.jainaconvention.org](http://www.jainaconvention.org)

3) Thanks to the community support, JAINA collected \$50,000 (\$25,000 Sponsors & \$25,000 matching ) matching funds during the Convention 2021 for JAINA General Funds.

4) JAINA brought a **3-week Summer Course “Earth is Calling” by Dr. Christopher Miller**. The course has helped attendees rediscover and apply Jain Dharma in their life.

## August 2021

1) JAINA brings an opportunity to attend a **virtual 6 month lecture series on ‘The Philosophy of Jain Karma Theory’ by Pujya Dr. Shri Arunvijayji Maharaj Saheb**. The series started on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and is conducted in Hindi language. Here is the link for the zoom meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83716008967?pwd=TVBMVkh4WGdhNzF0K1hKRUdUbjk5dz09>

6 Months lecture series by

पू. पं. डॉ. श्री अरुणविजयजी म. ( Double M.A., Ph.D.)



Starting from

**21** August 21st, 2021 - SATURDAY

11:00 AM (EST)  
10:00 AM (CST)  
08:00 AM (PST)  
08:30 PM (IST)

Class Duration

**1 Hour**

Language

**Hindi**

Schedule of

**12 Classes**

2) With the help of the community, JAINA has donated about \$1,500,000 to Sadharmik needy families in India through reputable NGOs in India. India is still fighting against the pandemic. Many families have lost their loved ones, jobs, and are struggling. JAINA requests you to come forward and make your generous donation to the JAINA Sadharmik Fund. We will be donating the funds to Jeevan Jyot Cancer Relief & Care Trust and other similar reputed NGOs in India.

3) JAINA's Jain Connect, conducted two successful matrimonial events - Open Networking session as well as Virtual Singles Mixer for the Jain singles.

4) After the last year JAINA's protest against the desecration of Jain Pratimas in Live Nations Founders Room Clubs, several meetings were held with them and as a result, they have now agreed to donate all the 7 Pratimas from their Club floors in Las Vegas and other cities to JAINA. Presently they have removed all these pratimas from their facilities and stored them in their warehouses

## **September 2021**

For Paryushan and Das Lakshan Parva, JAINA published 18 newsletters consisting of Jain principles, ways of reflections, importance of 10 Dharmas, and animated Jain stories, and scheduled Samvantsari Pratikramans for all the sects.



For Paryushan, JAINA took a laabh to bring the most inspiring speakers to the community - Rashtasant Param Gurudev Shri Namramuni Maharaj Saheb, Shri Deepakbhai Bardoliwala, Dr. Prof Priyadarshna Jain who gave lectures in Hindi, Gujarati, and English respectively.

During Paryushan, JAINA re-broadcasted one of the most admired items from the convention **Mahavir - Ek Aloukik Katha** - the musical act that presents Bhagwan Mahavir's life from birth to Nirvana with stavans that were composed by Shri Shantilal Shah more than 50 years ago.



During the Das Lakshana Maha Parv, we brought to the community lectures by 108 Muni Shri Praman Sagarji Maharaj, Shri Dhyani Sagarji Maharaj, Dr. Kirit Gosalia, Panditji Mahesh Kumar Jain, and 108 Muni

Shri Pranamya Sagar Ji Maharaj in Hindi and English. People also participated in virtual Bhavna and Arti Bhajans.



## **Upcoming Projects**

JAINA is working to bring the 'Jain Senior Assisted Living Project in the USA' with all amenities for senior citizens 65 years and older, who are seeking a place to live with people of similar age and interests. So far we have received more than 54 applications from Seniors interested in relocating to any Jain Senior Assisted Living Projects in the USA.

We encourage senior citizens to fill out the form at: [https://www.jaina.org/page/Seniors\\_Intake\\_Form](https://www.jaina.org/page/Seniors_Intake_Form) for our analysis. The responses received so far, give us a base to look for an affordable location and start planning the logistics, budgeting, etc.

Finally, on September 2, JAINA signed a MOU with Veerayatan International to build a JAINA School from Kindergarten to High School in Rajgir, Bihar, on a 5 acre plot assigned for it. Through its World Community Service JAINA will soon launch a fundraising drive to collect \$1 million needed for building the school.

On behalf of JAINA, I express my gratitude to the North American Jain Community for their continued support and encouragement. With your support, we aim to make JAINA more accessible to the community and do more things for the betterment of the society.

As a President of JAINA, my main focus for the past two years has been on how to help our community. Looking back, I feel grateful that we have successfully achieved many of our goals. You can read more about JAINA's accomplishments during the past two years at:

[https://www.jaina.org/resource/resmgr/01\\_achievement/Maheshbhai\\_Achievement.pdf](https://www.jaina.org/resource/resmgr/01_achievement/Maheshbhai_Achievement.pdf)

With Peace, Love, and Happiness,

Mahesh Wadher

# Introducing the Jain Digest Editorial Team

Some of you may have heard of a 1969 movie “If It’s Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium”. It refers to a tour of various countries in Europe where Tuesday is the day to visit Belgium. However, for the members of the Jain Digest editorial team, if it’s Tuesday evening, it must be the time for a Jain Digest meeting!

## Jain Digest – Behind the Scenes

For that past few years during the planning phase of the next issue of Jain Digest, we have been meeting every Tuesday evening over Zoom. We start with a kick-off meeting for each issue about three months prior to the publication date. Prior to October 2019, we used to decide on the theme of the new issue - such as Compassion, Forgiveness, Humility, etc; and then decide on the articles related to that theme. Since then, because we have changed the format to have various sections in the magazine, each section editor is given an opportunity to propose articles for their section. During the first two months, we meet to discuss and finalize the article topics, assign authors & provide them guidelines for the articles, review their drafts, etc. During the last month prior to publication, we add pictures to the articles, design the front cover and inside pages, create PDF files and do a final review. After the final version is ready, we upload it to the Issuu platform where a flip-book version is created. As a part of that process, we make sure all the external links to videos and websites are working properly and then publish the magazine. The Issuu platform also allows us to provide links to individual articles in the magazine. These links are then published through JAINA Newsletter so that our readers can directly go to the article of their interest.

The team works in a collaborative environment where each member is encouraged to express their opinion about the proposed content, new ideas, design of the front page as well as inside pages, etc. We discuss the feedback received from our readers and make needed improvements. We also share ideas about how the magazine readership can be increased. The team members are always ready to try new ways of reaching out to the wider Jain community - not only in North America, but around the world.

We encourage you all to join this wonderful team & bring your passion & creativity to serve our community!



**Sanjay Bhandari, Detroit, MI**  
**Editor, Young Generation Section**

Sanjay Bhandari has been a part of the leadership team at Jain Society of Greater Detroit at various positions such as Publication Officer - Executive team, Vice Chairman - Board of Trustees & has been an active team member of the Nomination team and various Fund Raising teams over the past 17 years. He served as a volunteer during the 2013 JAINA Convention held in Detroit, Michigan.

Sanjay has participated in various musical events as a singer and performer with various organizations. His interest include singing, listening to the music, traveling, socializing, writing movie reviews, running the YouTube channel with various performances/reviews.

About his experience in working with the Jain Digest team, Sanjay says:

*“I got a great opportunity to join the Jain Digest in 2015. Since then, I have written and edited many articles. I found myself fortunate to be part of this wonderful team with so many talented editors and advisors from various states in USA. With each edition, I have learned some new things and I also got a chance to work with the teams from young generation Jain such as YJA and YJP. Writing, editing, and reading the Jain Digest articles has changed my perspective towards Jainism and its values to a great extent.*

*The Jain Digest team is extremely helpful and supportive. The members come up with many good ideas. We meet regularly to discuss how to bring better content and quality to Jain Digest. Since July 2019 we have moved the publication to a multimedia online version which enables us to embed videos and links to other websites, thus enriching the reader’s experience. This has also saved JAINA thousands of dollars in printing and shipping costs.”*



**Giriraj Jain,  
Cupertino, CA  
Editor,  
Information Section**

Giriraj Jain previously served in the Board and Executive Committee of Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) in Milpitas. He is a dedicated volunteer at JCNC and many other volunteer organizations across the San Francisco Bay area.

By profession, he is an engineer and lives in Cupertino with his wife and two kids. He also enjoys volunteering for cooking events and specializes in preparing meals at scale for community events, JCNC and other volunteer organizations.

Here is what Giriraj ji has to say about his experience in working with the Jain Digest Team:

*“Volunteering with Jain Digest is a very satisfying experience. In addition to having the satisfaction of serving the community, it is great to meet and discuss about many dignitaries and learned people and learn more about Jain principles. While reading is a good thing, writing those good things takes a lot of discussions, research and multiple views on the same topic and I found it was the best way to learn.”*

*We also went through few transformations for Jain Digest in the past few years including section-based articles and all electronic publication with option for paper print for those who wanted a paper copy. Electronic publication opened up a whole new avenue of reachability to a larger section of Jain community in the world. And the best part is to work with the amazing Jain Digest team with great experience and Seva bhav. Thank you, Dilipbhai and Jain Digest team for this amazing learning experience.”*



**Dr. Parveen Jain,  
San Jose, CA  
Advisor**

Parveen Jain, PhD, a resident of San Jose in the Silicon Valley, enjoys the new phase of his life after an exciting corporate career of over thirty years as a founder and chief or senior executive of multiple technology companies. Parveen always has cherished philanthropy and held leadership roles in various non-profit organizations nationwide. For many years, he has been a Trustee of the International Mahavira Jain Mission, where, from the beginning, he has been deeply involved with the founding and growth of Siddhachalam – the first Jain tirtha outside of India. He led the team to build JCNC’s Jain Temple and Community Center and continues as an active advisor. Previously, he was a founding Director of the Sunnyvale Hindu Temple, served as a Trustee of the American Foundation for the Blind, and was a founding team member of the South Asian Heart Center.

Currently, besides other non-profits, Parveen serves as a Founding Director of Stanford Center for Asian Health Research and Education. In addition, he enjoys mentoring bright entrepreneurs and serves on the Boards of several technology companies. Besides the philanthropic activities, Parveen joyously spends time with his grandkids, self-studies, and writing. He is the author of the book “An Introduction to Jain Philosophy”.

Here are Parveen’s comments about his experience in working with the Jain Digest team:

*“Jain Digest is a high-quality publication, and it continues to steadily improve by bringing excellent articles on highly relevant subjects related to the Jain way of life. The dedicated and committed editorial team is an exemplary group of volunteers working with a very focused goal of offering the best to magazine’s readers. It is inspirational to work with this excellent team.”*





**Rajendra Kumar Jain,**  
Piscataway, NJ  
Editor,  
Education Section

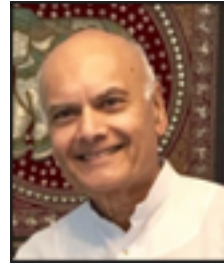
Raj Jain is a JAINA Director and a trustee of the International Jain Sangh, NJ. He is Co-Founder and CEO of Qmart International Inc. Prior to that he worked for 20 years with Bell Labs/AT&T. Raj has an eMBA from Wharton School of Business, PA and AT&T School of Business in Finance and Business Management. He is a Chair of JAINA Population Survey Committee, and also serving on the JAINA Constitution and JAINA Membership Committees. Raj has also served on the School Board of Education in Piscataway.

Raj is originally from Meerut (UP) in India, currently living in NJ with wife Neerja for over 30 years, raising a great family of 2 daughters Nidhi and Ruchi, both Physicians and son Rajat, a businessman. Elder daughter is married with Nishant, who is a Cardiologist, and have a darling, the cutest granddaughter, “Sanya”, with the grace of god, humbled and thankful for it all.

About his experiences in working in various capacities at JAINA and on the Jain Digest team, Raj says:

*“I am very proud to see Jainism continue to thrive and flourish under the influences of JAINA and our great local organizations like International Jain Sangh, Jain Center of NJ/NY and SNDJSOUSA amongst all others which have been able to bring awareness and spread the principles of Jainism throughout the world. I am humbled by the opportunity to have been a part of these great organizations and look forward to continually serving our communities in spreading Jainism, Peace and Non-violence.*

*I am blessed to have been a part of the Editorial Team of Jain Digest, where I have been able to see the workings of a great team in publishing our articles and have been able to learn and make a small contribution to our communities and the future generation as a whole thru our long running beloved magazine, I have always looked forward to receiving and reading, the Jain Digest.”*

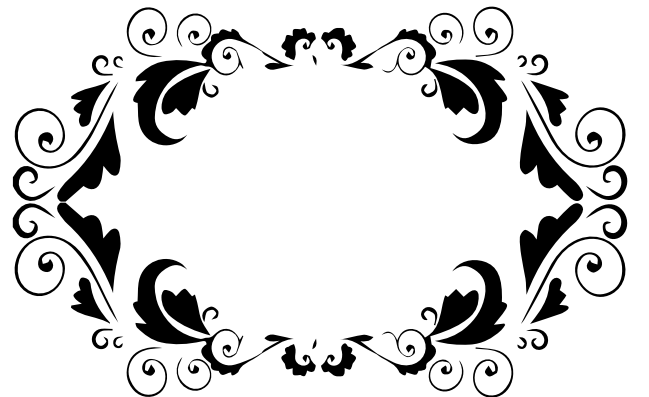


**Ramesh Khandhar,**  
Los Angeles, CA  
Editor,  
Transformation Section  
and Advisor

Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of executive board and past head teacher of pathshala at Jain Center of Southern California. Currently he goes to India for a few months, staying in Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram at Koba. He travels around to deliver spiritual discourses and continues to do intense introspection and contemplation. In addition, his special interest is reading and contemplating Jain scriptures, listening to spiritual discourses, enjoying solitude, and writing spiritual articles in ‘Divya Dhvani’ and in Jain Digest magazines. Currently he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest.

Ramesh enjoys contributing to the Jain Digest and says:

*“I came on board when Jain Digest needed total transformation in terms of its content and format. New sections, such as Transformation, Inspiration and others were introduced with a high degree of success and redefined existing ones. Good balance between spiritual, religious, and informational articles is being achieved with sections such as Compassion, Devotion, Information, Young Generation, Inspiration, and Community Corner. I enjoy being a part of the wonderful team which considerably changed the content and format. It is a delightful experience and feeling to be an editor of the Transformation section and writing articles. I believe the new improved version is welcomed by the Jain community and it is in-line with the modern contemporary spiritual aspects of Jainism.”*





**Dilip Parekh,  
Los Angeles, CA  
Editor-in-Chief  
and Editor,  
Devotion Section**

Dilip Parekh is a native of Pune, India and currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Sushama. After a 40 year career as a Software Development Manager, he retired in 2018 and is pursuing his passion in learning, practicing & teaching Jain philosophy and serving the community. Dilip is an active member of the Jain Center of Southern California and has been a Pathshala teacher for 20 years, teaching high school students. He is also a self-published author of a children's story book titled "Take a Deep Breath, Sky!" that teaches children about patience, acceptance and how to stay calm in adverse situations.

During 2010 and 2011, he was an active member of the e-Jain Digest editorial team. In October 2015, he was given an opportunity to serve as an Editor of Jain Digest. Since then, under his guidance and leadership, the team has published 18 issues of the magazine, including one special edition dedicated to Jain Academic Education. Since becoming a chairman of the Jain Digest committee in 2019, he successfully launched an online version of the magazine & brought the cost of printing and mailing the magazine from over \$60,000 to less than \$1,500 annually.

About his experience in working on Jain Digest, Dilip says:

*"Working on each issue of Jain Digest with the dedicated team of volunteers has been a very fulfilling experience for me. It is wonderful to work with team members that challenge the status quo and think about innovative ways to bring high quality content to our readers. With valuable guidance from our advisors and by understanding the needs of our readers, we have been able to bring interesting and educational articles to our community. Our focus is on Jain values and virtues that are common across all faiths in the world. Although publishing each new issue itself is gratifying, our hearts become full of joy and gratitude when we hear from our readers that they love the magazine, and it helps them in their spiritual growth."*



**Dr. Hema Pokharna,  
Chicago, IL  
Advisor**

Dr. Hema Pokharna is a Certified Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Trainer. As an Executive Coach and Consultant, she works with leaders and their teams to improve personal and organizational collaborative leadership. Hema has a unique background, born and raised in India in the Jain tradition; she immigrated to the United States and trained as a biochemist turned alchemist igniting the passion for love and optimism in the mind and heart, as a Nonviolent Communication trainer and Resilience and Vitality Coach. Hema and her sister Manda have worked to train people worldwide in the disciplines of Nonviolent Communication. Hema is also an interfaith peacemaker and mediator and has served on the board of Parliament of World Religion, Play for Peace other interfaith organizations.'

Here is what Hema has to say about her experience in working with the Jain Digest team:

*"I have been a part of the Jain Digest team for several years and have enjoyed every minute. Each meeting is well organized. The team's approach to take on work based on each ones skills and talents makes it fun for everyone. and creates a very robust product. Each voice is heard, ideas discussed and expanded; and in the end there is something magical that brings the articles and the images together to create a very appealing magazine. I enjoy the growth and outreach of JD and now that it is digital, the growth and readership has significantly increased. The real growth is that the community members are sharing of themselves, writing articles, comments, feedback etc."*

*I believe that Jain Digest has supported in creating and highlighting an abundance of creativity, talent, initiative, energy, and resourcefulness to serve the world. It has much capacity to become a vehicle that energizes and communicates people's potential and value and can bring more communities together to protect dignity, create peace and miracles of love in the world. It's been a pleasure and privilege to be part of team creating such quality work. I invite more people to join us in ways that feels joyful to you in creating a world of possibilities. Much Gratitude."*



**Dilip V. Shah,  
Philadelphia, PA  
Advisor**

Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Constitution Committee and member of the Academic Liaison Committee. In addition to being an advisor for Jain Digest, he is also publisher and General Editor of Jain Avenue magazine – a publication of JAINA India Foundation.

He has been associated with Jain Digest for a long time and is a frequent contributor to the magazine. Here are his thoughts about Jain Digest:

*“Long before email and messaging services were invented, news traveled by newspapers and magazines. JAIN DIGEST has been one vehicle for over 30 years. A lot of changes have come from the first few issues being 5 ½” x 8 ½” to the current issues as digital editions. Our early leaders committed to mailing them to every household at great financial costs to JAINA. Now that we have gone mostly digital, the printing and mailing costs are not of any concern. What has not changed over the years is the dedication with which the editorial team provides interesting and educational articles about Jain values and principles as well as news about the Jain universe to its readers across the globe.*

*I have had the privilege of frequently writing for the magazine for the last 20 years. I have authored many book reviews, JAINA Convention reports, Pilgrimage reports, and a few informative articles that received many feedbacks nearly all very encouraging. Seeing my words in print encouraged me to become a better writer. I have found our editorial team, including the current one, very cooperative and helpful. I am sure JAIN DIGEST will continue to prosper in popularity and readership with the new digital format.”*



**Jayana Shah,  
Los Angeles, CA  
Art and Design,  
Editor,  
Compassion Section**

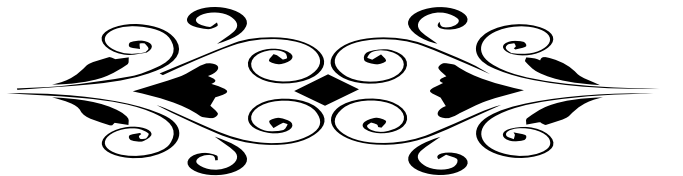
Jayana Shah, is a Graphics Designer by profession, but prefers to be known as a “Sevak”. She is a longtime Southern California resident with deep involvement with a number of volunteer activities at Jain Center of Southern California, JAINA and many other NGOs such as VOSAP (Voice of Specially Abled People), TCCOP, ACC, Local Rescue Mission, etc.

She has a great support from her husband Naresh Shah Kids - Vishal and Reena and beloved grand kids Kavish and Ayan Shah

She started her volunteering service with JCSC and for JAINA she has volunteered in the Souvenir Committee in 2015, 2017, 2019 (Chair) and 2021, Creative director of the Cultural Program and Religious committee in the 2019 Convention and Chair, Cultural Committee for the 2021 Convention. She has been contributing her services to JAINA Calendar for many years including leading the efforts as a Chair of the Calendar Committee for 2020-21.

About her work on Jain Digest, Jayana says:

*“Working with the team that is very passionate about their contribution is a great experience plus I get to learn from each issue. I am very grateful to JAINA for giving me the opportunity to combine my two passions - Creativity and Seva. It brings me a lot of joy to create new layouts and updated look for each issue of the magazine. Showcasing compassionate stories from different parts of world and combine them with Jain principles is a very rewarding experience.”*





**Reena Shah,**  
Los Angeles, CA  
Editor,  
Inspiration Section

Reena earned her MA in Communications Management from USC, her Teaching Credential at CSUN and has a MA and a Ph.D. in English literature from Gujarat University. She has taught middle, high school, and college students over the past nineteen years. Teaching has always been a passion and she loves to read and write. She is dedicated to lifelong learning and continuing education. She is also an experienced Speech and Debate coach with strong knowledge of skills and strategies. Her industry experience includes Market Research, Non-Profit, and educational institutions. She practices deeper aspects of spirituality and is a follower of Param Pujya Pappaji at Shrimad Rajchandra Research Centre, Mumbai.

About her experience in working with the Jain Digest team, Reena says:

*"I am very passionate about writing for Jain Digest. I believe that Jain values like compassion, fearlessness, humility, sincerity are all qualities of soul and writing about these can change the world and I use it to inspire young people through my articles about everyday people. I believe that readers look for inspiration from ordinary people who have faced and overcome difficulties. Writing for Jain Digest challenges, inspires, and empowers me to find meaning in my own life through these inspirational souls. I have realized that spirituality is not necessarily an attribute of a religious affiliation – it is rather an attitude of the mind, the heart, and the soul."*

*Working with the Jain Digest team has fostered creativity and learning, enabled sharing of workload, helped gain new perspective, and has made work more fun."*



**Anop Vora,**  
Rochester, NY  
Advisor

Anop Vora is the past president of JAINA and has served JAINA for over 20 years. He is also the founder president of Shri Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya International Alumni Association that was established to help the bright and needy students for professional education. Currently, he is a member of the JAINA Constitution Committee and the Chair of the JAINA Election Committee. His interests include Listening to the Spiritual Discourses, sharing his knowledge with others and Reading & Writing on the religious topics.

Here is what Anop says about his experience in working with the Jain Digest team:

*"Before Dilipbhai took over the editorship of Jain Digest, I used to write articles for Jain Digest once in a while because the number of spiritual articles were few and far in between. A good amount of space was used for Jain center news. In addition, printed edition was expensive and therefore the total number of pages were limited too."*

*But now the things have changed. Jain Center news are now covered in the weekly JAINA Newsletter. This has allowed us to focus on making the content rich spiritually, catering to many sections of our community. I find it very fulfilling to serve the Jain Community through Jain Digest. I believe the quality of the magazine has gone up substantially. I hope more people would take the time and benefit from it. It has indeed become a gold mine of very useful and helpful information. I am very happy that I am a part of this wonderful team."*



# Community Voices

## 2021 JAINA Convention Sessions



Each speaker was good in what they delivered, but I liked Sister Shivani the most who in a very simple and effective way taught us how to energize our day and live happily.

--- **Anonymous, MD, USA**

Almost all of the sessions were thought provoking and provided good insight, from the microscopic session with Nandigosh Suri to the holistic approach by Namramuni.

--- **Nimesh Chheda, MD, USA**

Speakers were amazing, I like bringing different speakers than past many years repeated same one. Try to bring more in line with better living and vegan related speakers.

--- **Sharad N Doshi, MD, USA**

I really liked the JAINA Convention program. Many speakers were awesome. I got inspired by many of them. There was everyday something new to learn and inspire. Platform was nicely created.

--- **Vora, USA**

Many kudos to all volunteers! it was great convention on-line. So many good sessions from knowledgeable speakers who were well prepared. really enjoyed completely everything I attended.

--- **Dipali, IL, USA**

The variety of topics was great with nothing missing. Speakers in three different languages made it more friendly. The age group of Speakers was also quite wide so that everyone could connect. We could find a lot of new speakers along with the popular ones.

--- **Bhaven Kamdar, West Bengal, India**

Speakers, scholars, monks and saints selection by JAINA Committee was exceptional. Dr. Bipin Doshi, Dr. Chris Jain Miller, Pujya Ratna SagarmSundarji and many more had splendid approach in presenting complex subjects in easy, practical and actionable way.

--- **Bakul Matalia, NY, USA**

Dr Gyanvaysal Sawmill session was informative, easy to follow and very insightful. Eye opening experience of human life, how one should have complete faith in dharam and in self from Swaminarayan's perspective. It was tied beautifully with Jain principles. Thoroughly enjoyed it.

--- **Sneha Kothari, Toronto, ON, Canada**

The topics given to each of the 6 keynote speakers were pertinent and relevant to my everyday life situations. Besides roping in the best of the best speakers, JAINA did a good job at giving them the right topics. I was blessed to attend all sessions (keynote speakers) and get valuable lessons of life.

--- **Hiten Gutka, NJ, USA**

All speakers I watched were authentic and knowledgeable in their respective subject matter. They explained their topics enthusiastically and kept me involved.

--- **Dhiren N. Shah, Ph. D, IN, USA**

Dr. Bimal Chhajer's session on heart disease and prevention was excellent. We need more lectures like that for diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.

--- **Jit Turakhia, New York, USA**

All the speakers!/ Scholars I attended were very knowledgeable and their topics were connected to our Jain principles of Ahimsa, Anekantvad and Aprigrah.

--- **Jagruti, NJ, USA**

Excellent speakers! Tirth darshan was added bonus to this year's convention. Anumodana to all who made this everlasting memories for me and my family. Looking forward for many more!

--- **Bina Shah, TX, USA**

Great to listen to speakers from around the world. Good opportunity to listen to Acharya Maharaj Sahebs due to virtual convention.

--- **Anonymous**

Thanks to JAINA for excellent programs. Tirth Darshan was great for seniors who otherwise would not have been able to do it, JAINA provided them with home Darshan. Hats off to everyone involved and a ton of thanks to JAINA.

--- **Anonymous**

Speaker selection was excellent and enjoyed very much, each speaker had its own style to convey the common message of Ahimsa & Unity, my wife and I learned a lot. Only issue we had was with sound which was not satisfactory, and missed the speaker eye contact - nothing like meeting under one roof.

--- **Jayant Shah, USA**

I feel all events were very interesting and educational. Great chance to listen to very famous and popular Jain Acharya Gurudev Maharaj in Bharat. It was great to listen from great Jain and non-Jain speakers. This was possible only due to JAINA.

--- **Anonymous, MI, USA**

Maharaj Sahebji lectures were great. We should continue and have more such lectures in future convention. It will be good to get new faces instead of same speakers from past conventions. This time we had a lot of new speakers which was great.

--- **Anonymous, NJ, USA**

# Community Voices

## 2021 JAINA Convention Sessions



Each of the speakers we listened to were absolutely enlightening. We truly enjoyed Acharya Ratna Sundersuri Maharaj, Dr. Kumarpal Desai, Gurudev Namramuni. In-fact we are hoping all of the speaker sessions will be uploaded on YouTube and made available for several months so that we can go back and listen again & again.

--- **Kanti A Jasani**

Some of the speakers delivered great message in depth regarding subject matters on Jain philosophy. e.g. Acharya Udayvallbhsuriji and Ratnasudarsuriji. Rahul Kapoor did great job. Samaysar content was good but quality of video was very poor. Dr. Kumarpal Desai did in-depth research regarding VR Gandhi.

--- **Hamir Vadi, NJ, USA**

What touched my heart was that kids and youth from all over the country (and maybe even the world!) were so interested in Jainism and the history/tradition their culture has and students (Jains got talent, JAB) worked so hard in order to learn different aspects of Jainism. Our future is in good hands.

--- **Diya Shah, MD, USA**

All topics were very relevant and applicable to our modern life irrespective of where we live!!! All of them did fantastic job of explaining ancient wisdom, Jainism concepts in a very simplified way. I am very thankful to all speakers & JAINA committee for sharing such wonderful sessions with us! Thank you!!!

--- **Anonymous, CA, USA**

JAINA has taken amazing initiatives, whether for humanity, or for saving JAIN scriptures and for imparting Jain education. None of these initiatives are driven by causes for a certain sect, or a certain temple or geographical area. Chandanji's suggestion to have JAINA cover the globe seems to be very inspiring. JAINA has visionary leaders, and the capacity to achieve the goal of bringing all Jains in the world under one umbrella. Pujya Gurudev Rakeshji's association between ahimsa and attachment was inspiring and brought a new perspective to ahimsa, that I had never thought of before.

--- **Sheetal Shah, Stamford, CT, USA**

Extremely good selection of speakers. Extremely commendable work by all JAINA Members who took the trouble since months! to get this to us, specially during these pandemic times. Loved BK Shivani, Gurudev Namramuni, Rahul Kapoor (sound was not available), Dr Bharill, Lokesh Muniji, Acharya Shri Ratnasunder Surishwarji, Munishri Jinchandraji and many more. Appreciated the summary of the past days speakers and highlights. AWESOME, COMMENDABLE EFFORT BY EVERYONE!!!!

--- **Anonymous, MD, USA**

WOW!! Global, Global. and Super. Outstanding, Speaker Sessions were effective and I am sure touched everyone's heart. Kudos' to all organizers. In general everything was perfect. 15000 plus viewers across 23 countries- what a Success!. It was so easy to move from one room to another without any interruption and delay. The help desk people were quick to response for any concern one may have. This is not a one day/one person task. It takes a lot of effort and resources for months for such a Grand undertaking. And always, I am proud to be Jain. Jai Jinendra

--- **Bhadrik Shah, CT, USA**

One of a kind, very well designed, spearheaded and brilliantly executed convention. - 2021. Incredible number of sessions were engaging and educational. We truly enjoyed all the Tirth Yatras, the narration, history of the Tirth dham, going through all the important spots on the way was incredible. The videography and high 4K quality are commendable. The Cultural program, JAB, Jain Got Talent, yoga, plating, calligraphy... the committee covered it all. Wow!! appreciated it every bit. Thank you. Our deepest gratitude to you all the volunteers, committee members. One thing to thank Covid-19 for, we got to witness Virtual Convention 2021 and do 12 Tirth Yatra, which convention made it possible. Thanks. Jai Jinendra. Khub Khub Anumodana.

--- **Devila Mehta-Karkhanis, Canada**

- "Eat Green to Go Green" - excellent group of young dynamic women presented very well
- Talk by Dr Christopher Jain Miller on plant-based diet was superb. I learned a couple of new points that I was not aware of. Magnificent presentation!
- YJA panel discussion on "A plant forward future - extremely well conducted, host and speaker superb. I found it very inspiring. Learned tips which I will put into practice
- YJP panel discussion on career change and transition I found especially useful as post covid I may have found myself at a crossroad where I may have to make a career change.
- Shilpa Naidu's real experience I found particularly sincere and moving.
- I missed most of the Women's conference sadly as I was at work but managed to catch up on demand and listened to Sister Shivani's talk which was the best lecture I have heard on this topic. I have never thought about "emotional diet" before and have decided to take it on board.
- Exhibition - superb
- Tirth teasers - nice and informative

The whole concept of the virtual conference I loved. Well done team!

--- **Pratula, England, UK**

# Community Voices

## 2021 JAINA Convention Sessions



I liked session on Philanthropy the most.

**- Anonymous**

PP Gurudev Shri Rakeshbhai was best and Sadhvi Shilapiji was also good.

**- Prakash Mody, ON, Canada**

Tirth Yatra , Yoga lessons and the Bollywood programs were great.

**- Yagnesh Safi, PA, USA**

The Ayurvedic Medicine lecture was great.

**- Anonymous**

Dr. Heggade's presentation was one of the best.

**--- Arvind Vora, NY, USA**

We liked Anekanvad by Dr Sejal Shah.

**--- Jagdish & Hansa Shah, USA**

Excellent choice of speakers. Very informative and relevant to the convention.

**--- Anonymous**

kids club Harry Potter, story of Anekantvaad for kids, kokilaben, a smooth road to drive your thoughts, Unshakable faith.

**--- Anonymous, CA, USA**

Speakers from one of us in Women's JAINA conference was very inspiring. Kid's club had amazing session like Temple from around the world. It was best way to stay home and learn.

**--- Anonymous, IL, USA**

All speakers were excellent, most touched my heart was BK Sister Shivani, Gurudev Namramuni saheb, and Rahul Kapoor.

**--- Pramod Shah, Montreal, QC, CANADA**

Tremendous participation from worldwide Jain community, wide variety of topics, & extremely deep field of speakers made this one of the most interesting and fascinating JAINA conventions of all time.

**--- Beejal Shah, LA, USA**

Pranam Sagar Maharajji, Pandit Maheshji, Rahul Kapoor Jain's sessions were very educational. Thanks JAINA for inviting speakers from all different traditions speakers.

**--- Harshad And Rita Shah, CA, USA**

The Kids Club programs were very good, engaging, and at the right level for our kids.

**--- Anonymous, NC, USA**

Gurudev Shree Rakeshbhai's lecture gave us different perspective as to what Ahimsa is.

**--- Anonymous, CA, USA**

Beautiful way of explaining Ahimsa by Pujya Rakeshbhai, giving a different viewpoint

**--- Anonymous, CA, USA**

Dr. Sanjeev Godha. We liked his pious demeanor and genuine effort to convey the Jain teachings.

**--- Manisha Damani**

Speaker sessions were motivational & a gentle nudge to incorporate Jain Principles into daily life.

**-- Renu Jain, Las Vegas, NV , USA**

Everything as best as can be. Simply not enough time watch all of them. Mr. Heggade was one of the best

**--- Anonymous**

Beautifully done!! Lots of hard work put in!! Cultural program was very well done..

**--- Anonymous, IN, USA**

Calligraphy session was very creative and the presenter was really into it. I'm glad to see such coverage.

**--- Mickey Shah, TX, USA**

Jain Connect was really well done, shout out to the planning team!

**--- Anonymous**

Rahul Kapoor was excellent, very clear voice and educational. Impressed !

**--- Anonymous**

All the speaker's were great. Loved the session of M.S Mahabodhi

**-- Sneha kothari, ON, Canada**

Session by Shree Arunvijayji, NayPadmasagarji, and Acharya Uday Vallabhsuriji

**--- Anonymous**

It was a wonderful program. Planning was good like Tirth yatra, Artis, evening programs, Mahaveer Swami life, morning yoga etc. but we missed being in person. But it was so good that people from all over the world were able to participate. Thanks for the hard work.

**--- Purnima Parikh, Cary, NC, USA**

Every Way you look and evaluate, every speaker invited was excellent. So thankful to JAINA organizing people and all volunteers who worked so hard so that all the people could benefit by listening just seating at HOME!!!

**--- Anonymous, TX, USA**

The Speakers session was very interesting. The topics were interesting. The medical session from Cardiologist Dr. Bimal Chhajera was very interesting. We need more topics like this for the next time. The spiritual lectures were very interesting like from Sadhvi Shilpaji. If more lectures were in English, that would benefit the Younger Generation. Overall all the speakers were Great!

**--- Sandhya Shah, NJ, USA**

Parul Somani, Rahul Kapoor Jain, Pujya Rakeshbhai and sister BK Shivani were amazingly awesome - personal improvement lectures and really touched our hearts!! Parul Somani was amazing speaker with good slides and very helpful! Enjoyed the Dayro and Bhakti program very much!! The fact that JAINA 2021 was virtual made it very easy to join. Please allow the option of virtual in the future as well

**--- Kusum Shah, USA**

# Community Voices

## 2021 JAINA Convention Sessions



Great wisdom and Guru Vaani from the spiritual leaders/Maharaj Saheb to hear and follow for the rest of the life from the comfort of the home possible only due to JAINA being virtual. "AHOBHAGYA" amara to listen to this great wisdom and imbibe into practice. Nice topics across covered to engage all ages and audience.

--- **Viral Shah, TX, USA**

The speakers were great, their speech was great, I liked Rakeshbhai pravachan. It touched my heart when he explained the positivity of Jain Religion.

- **Anonymous**

Enjoyed Shri Namramuni ji's pravachan and B K Shivani. All of them was very good in explaining Jain principle as well as how to live your life peacefully.

- **Anonymous**

All sessions were thought provoking. Made me reflect on who am I? what is my purpose and how do I achieve that. Also use my virtues as friends and beware of my foes(vices). Be very mindful about the thoughts, actions and expressions of the present. Be the best writer of the rest of life.

--- **Hemendra Momaya, Chicago, IL, USA**

Speaker selection was good. Listening to sadhu bhagavants are always enlightening. I enjoyed listening to Sister Shivaniji since her message is very clear and easy to put in practice. I will listen rest of the sessions on demand. If possible to upload on JAINA website for future listening. Yoga sessions were great. I watched all four instructors and they were very informative and motivating. In short it was a GREAT CONVENTION.

--- **Bhavana Janak Shah, FL, USA**

I have attended so many JAINA conventions since 1996 but this was one of the best. I was able to watch sessions "on demand" and cover all the great speakers which in previous conventions was not possible. Hope "on demand" will continue in future even with physical attendance. Another plus was Tirth darshan. It was fantastic, Only suggestion would be to do a real yantra (for in person convention may be). Overall amazing conference!! "Well done" to the organizers!

--- **Parimal Shah, Houston, TX, USA**

Excellent topics and presenters. Good for physical, spiritual and well being of mind and soul. I will go on demand to see other topics not seen in breakout sessions. Great and knowledgeable authorities in the subject matter.

For questions, speaker's contact information should be provided at end or separately by emails to all attendees.

Keep up great job. Use this virtual convention for future along with in person presence as some people may not be able to travel.

--- **Bhupendra Deliwala, FL, USA**

All featured speakers' sessions were top notch! Some of the Session Speakers from Breakout rooms were also amazing. Great content, great quality of video, and flawless streaming. I watched some of the On-Demand YJP sessions, too. Dharmesh Shah (CEO of HubSpot), Pinkesh Shah (Product Leadership CEO) was great. Dr. Steven Southwick, Parul Somani, Nayapadma Suri MS - these are few sessions I highly recommend watching on-demand. Message from Keynote speaker Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai, Ratnasundar Suri MS, Dr. Gnanvatsal Swami, HH Dalai Lama, Rashtrasant Namramuniji, BK Sister Shivani - was good. Very fitting to our theme and unbiased in anyway. Great choice on Featured Speakers.

--- **Anonymous, IL, USA**

MY BEST Convention experience out of the 5 I have attended. All dignitaries, well known luminaries, sadhu sadhis motivational and broader spectrum of speakers were very motivational, spiritually uplifting and stimulating. What was most touching was this feeling of being the member of this global family and rich common heritage. The common theme throughout the messages of this convention connection being Global raises the bar for future conventions. In terms for proactive effort for stronger global active multi sectarian participation and efforts for the unification.

--- **Pradeep Shah, USA**

"The sessions led by Rahul Kapoor Jain, BK Shivani, Parul Somani, and Pritesh Mutha/Prerak Shah were phenomenal. The sessions were motivational, inspirational, and much needed to achieve inner peace and calm during the pandemic. Anumodna to all JAINA organizers and volunteers for putting together a fabulous event! Kudos to you for making the transition from in person to online seem so seamless in spite of the challenges due to the pandemic. You have raised the bar by making this a global platform. All sessions were of great quality and the team's creativity was evident in the variety presented, i.e., plating, calligraphy, virtual tirth yatra, late night cultural show/comedy/dance ballet, etc.

--- **Ashok and Chanchala Jain, SC, USA**

# Community Voices

## 2021 JAINA Convention Sessions



Sessions were relevant to the theme and provided information about Jainism.

--- **Narendra Maniar**

Different perspective on topics and content, new learning or reviewing again.

--- **Anonymous, OH, USA**

Like the diversity in selection of the speakers and their knowledge serving all age group.

--- **Anonymous, CA, USA**

Speeches of Rahul Kapoor, Acharya Maha Shramanji, and few other Jain Acharyajis touched our hearts

--- **Kamala**

Bhaav Yatra of the tirths were the best!

--- **Tejas Mehta, CA, USA**

The spiritual speakers mastered the medium & conveyed their messages. The clarity of their thinking & sincerity was heart warming. Great job!

- **Anonymous, IL,**

Liked Namramuniji's session. His humility, appreciation for JAINA's efforts in organizing the convention and being an example of resiliency was very insightful and touching.

--- **Anonymous, CA, USA**

Speakers sessions were very interesting and inspiring. I liked the pravachan of Acharya shri Namramuni Maharaj, Dhiraj Muni. The work of shri Virendra Heggadeji was very inspiring.

--- **Anonymous, USA**

Namramuni and sister Shivani's leachers were so practical that we can use in our day to day life and any one can understand. Young adults can put it in practice. Really enjoyed it.

--- **Rajul Shah, San Jose, CA, USA**

The speakers in general provided very worthwhile information. particularly impressed by Dr. Kumarpalji's presentation of VRGandhi's life story and his accomplishments in relation to Jain religion. Also enjoyed Tarlaben Doshi's speech. She speaks from the heart and soul. I was happy to have Tirth Yatra's, particularly the Sammed Shikharji, Palitana, Nakodaji and other Jain Tirths. Excellent, once in lifetime opportunity for me because I have not been to some of these tirth's.

--- **Mukundkumar A Shah, USA**

This convention platform was the best for 3 reasons -

- 1] we were able to attend many programs than what is possible in in-person convention and
- 2] It was done extremely well so that our attention to scholars, Yatra to Jain temples in India with beautiful photography and Puja and Mangal Deevo, including history of surrounding etc. was amazing.
- 3] Even though this was web based, it felt more like in person. I wish to congratulate all persons involved in this event for making such a spell bound event. No words can describe appropriately the joy it brought to us and many Jains around the world

--- **Anonymous, IL, USA**

JAINA 2021 Virtual Event was a True Global Experience. With Speakers, audience, and subject matter. I was truly touched by Bijal Doshi's Yoga sessions. Bijalben is a Great instructor with clarity of thought and focus. Dr. Steven Southwick - From Yale School of Medicine. Jainism and Resilience. He took Jainism to a different level of understanding. Finally, Keynote Speaker Pujya Shri Rakeshbhai. He explained Ahimsa and Jainism from a different perspective. How Ahimsa, thoughts Karma are interrelated. Positive and negative aspects in the term Ahimsa. Which was very interesting. Rakeshbhai is very precise and articulate. This was my first experience with JAINA convention. It was GREAT. Thanks to all the Volunteers. It takes a village for a success of an event. Life - Keep it Simple. Take Jainism to Next level.

--- **Anonymous, NJ, USA**

The yoga sessions greatly improved my mood and felt it was a fantastic way to kickstart the day. The aartis were fantastic and it helped me reconnect with my spirituality. The Vegan Jainism was by far the best. It was substantial and thought provoking. Some programs from the Young Jain Professionals including the CTO from Hubspot was spot on, and very relevant. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

--- **Vijaya Jeyakumar, ON, Canada**

- 1) Young kids at talent shows
- 2) Udayvallabh M. S. on Anekantvad
- 3) Ratnasunder M.S. on five controls
- 4) Pujya Rakeshbhai on Non-Violence and love
- 5) "Mahavir ek katha" - a Jain musical ballet
- 6) Cultural program of the globe as a whole

--- **Anonymous, Los Gatos, CA, USA**

It was a great job done by JAINA Convention Team. Amazing coordination, great programs, great platform, and very good speakers. Tirth Yatra was a great new concept that was introduced this year. On Demand Section gave lots of flexibility. All in all, we had great experience. Doing virtual convention for the first time is a great accomplishment by JAINA convention team as well as overall JAINA Leadership Team.

--- **Kaishal Dalal, USA**

All speakers were great and provided a roadmap to progress on the path of spirituality and set this life to serve others, to spread the awareness of worthy principles of Jainism for the betterment of all human beings and to move this world towards peace, kindness to live in harmony with all living creatures by appreciating all living beings and preserving the nature.

--- **Bharat Shah, Staten Island, NY, USA**

## Kids Club Committee

By Maulee Shah, Huntingdon Valley, PA



*Maulee Shah is a software engineer at one of the largest US law firms. She is a singer, dancer, choreographer, and mother of two beautiful children. She is a volunteer with many non-profit organizations including JAINA. Maulee has taught at pathshala and teaches sutras to the young generation. She enjoys making delish Jain and Vegan dishes and creates kids friendly Ayambil recipes. She loves to travel and hike.*

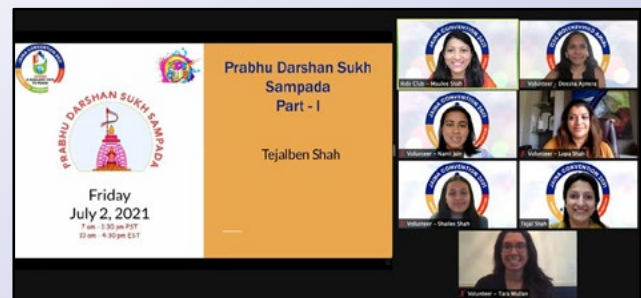
**Committee Members:** Maulee Shah - Committee Chair, Dimple Shah - Co-Chair, Deesha Ajmera

Like many unexpected journeys, the idea of an interactive virtual Kid's Club for JAINA 2021 started out as a chat in the hallway of the South New Jersey Jain Sangh Derasar. We were all just so happy to see one another after a year-long quarantine! The excitement was in the air and the enthusiasm to spread the joy of Jainism was irresistible.

Traditionally, the in-person JAINA Kid's Club was for ages 6-12 and was mostly a "drop-off" area so parents could attend sessions while their children were entertained and cared for. The idea of a scheduled online curriculum with education tailored for different age groups was novel. After many email and phone conversations with JAINA leadership and prior Kid's Club Chairs, I determined the right age groups to split the audience and found thematic elements that would be intriguing to each group.

I had attended JAINA conventions in the past, but this was my first time participating in the planning process. I was a bit nervous and concerned about the output; but my experience as a Pathshala teacher and proud mother of 2 reminded me that I know what kids will respond to. In this global online forum, we needed to teach children with activities in addition to didactic lectures.

activities were: Coloring and connect-the-dots of 14 dreams, Bhagwan's Lanchhans, Daily Niyams game, Stories of Shalibhadra, Megh Kumar, Hemchandracharya, Young Jain Minds magazine and games like I-spy, crossword puzzle, word scramble, word search, "know your Tirth" and many more. This would allow their parents to attend JAINA sessions without needing to provide regular I.T. support or worry about hours of screen time. There was also one live session for 6-8 year olds and they truly enjoyed learning Tirthankars' names and Lanchhan with a rap song while dancing and singing.



For our 6-8 year old audience, goal was to keep them occupied in a peaceful and introspective way. Their

For our 9-12 year old audience, I had a structured program with three to four sessions per day with an hour break in between sessions to help them recover from screen fatigue. For this age group, we took full advantage of the online platform and had a lot of assistance from YJA leadership. I asked myself, what would my kids want from this convention. My son, Rikin, loves stories and he is a foodie. My daughter, Jasmine, loves Harry Potter and exercise. I thought about all my nieces and nephews. While it is easy to come up with fun and creative ideas, the implementation for each session was the biggest achievement for Kid's Club. Our final lineup consisted of live workshops like Sathiyao, Jain cooking, Ahimsa Art, Astaprakari Bhav Puja.

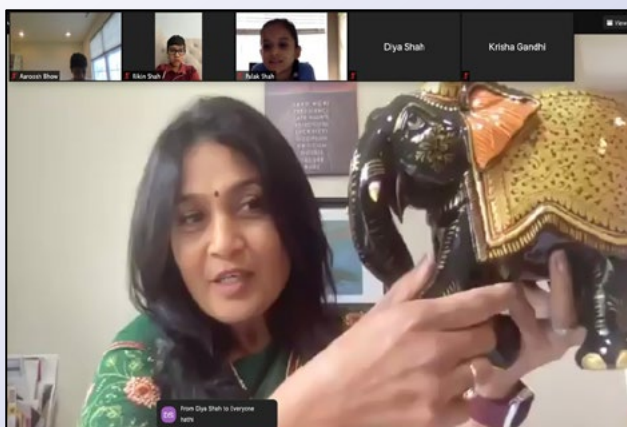
One of the speaker's was able to tie-in Harry Potter with Jain principles. ABCJ - **A**merican **B**orn **C**onfused **J**ain was among the best sessions which emphasized Jainism as a

lifestyle. It guided the youth on how to be a better Jain while raised outside of India.

As with any ambitious plan, there were challenges. Coming up with titles that enticed the audience was a minor hurdle. Our speakers fit into the plan like pieces of a puzzle, but it took a long time to realize there are more volunteers needed. There were I.T. needs, promotion assistance and generalized organization that were not easy to find. Deesha was a lifesaver and played a key role before and during the Kids Club sessions.



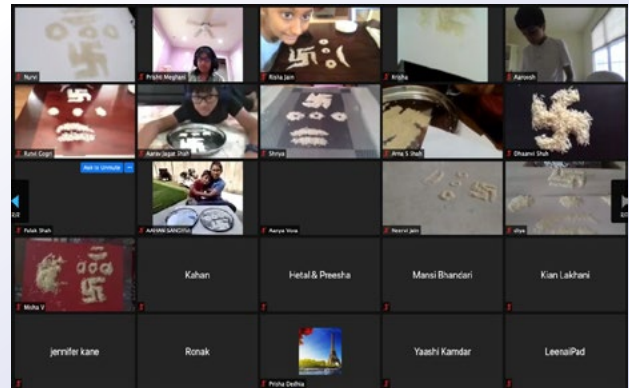
*No Stove - Live Jain Cooking*



*Storytime*

If I were to improve only one aspect of the 2021 Kid's Club, it would be global marketing. Our sessions were designed for a global audience with capacity for hundreds of participants. We fell short of that mark, but I hope the on-demand sessions are viewed by all! Other lessons learned: provide clear guidance of what level of commitment a team member or a volunteer will need to provide, keep ancillary volunteers for unexpected needs, and always have a backup plan for technology issues.

My support system - my husband, kids and both sets of parents are my biggest motivation. That made the 2021 JAINA Kid's Club experience incredible! It was a lot of work and I appreciate all the faith JAINA leadership put in me.. I also want to thank all my friends and relatives that gave me their support and time!



*Sathiyo Workshop*



*Yoga for fun!*

## Jain Academic Bowl Committee

By Shweta Daftary



*Shweta Daftary has been with the JAB Committee since 2017 and was appointed as its chairperson in 2019. She has been a long time resident of Dallas, TX where she taught Pathshala classes at the Jain Society of North Texas for 12 years followed by taking the position of the Pathshala coordinator. Along with actively volunteering for JAB, she maintains her full time dental practice in Dallas.*

*Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) Committee Members: Shweta Daftary, (Chair) Dallas, TX, Pravin Shah, Raleigh NC, Megha Doshi, Ashburn VA, Harsh Shroff, Chicago, IL, Raj Salecha, Los Angeles, CA, Siddharth Shah, Houston, TX, Sunil Vakharia, NJ (Global JAB)*

The **14<sup>th</sup> Jain Academic Bowl** was held at the 21<sup>st</sup> JAINA Convention from July 2<sup>nd</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>. For the very first time, this JAB tournament turned out to be unique and exciting due to three main reasons. It was a completely **Virtual Event**, with a **Global** and a **Beginner Category**!

### Here are some key facts about JAB 2021

- Four categories: **National Beginner, National Junior, National Senior and Global (Junior & Senior)**
- Countries represented: **United Kingdom, Canada, Kenya, India, the USA**
- A total of **220 participants** from the Pathshala centers of **North America, UK, Kenya and India** took part in this tournament.
- Approximately **40 Coaches** helped in preparing the participants.
- Total team count by category: **Beginner 11, Junior 6, Senior 6, Global 12 (Junior-6; Senior-6)**
- Total number of Games played: **68**
- Total approximate Game hours played: **105**
- Total Moderators helping with the games: **12**

### First Virtual JAB Tournament

Due to the pandemic situation, the 21<sup>st</sup> JAINA Convention was planned to be a completely virtual event. This decision had led the JAB Admin team to be doubtful about the possibility of a JAB tournament. However, we were not ready to give up easily in spite of the challenges of a virtual game set up. It took approximately 15 virtual trial games to overcome the many hurdles of a physical JAB tournament such as, conferring during round 1, using of a buzzer for rounds 2 and 3, displaying of the scores for the game and the ability to do a team huddle between the

rounds. With continuous support from the JAINA convention technology team, mainly from Harsh Shah, and the hard work of JAB Admin members, the virtual games turned to be a reality with the same, or at times even greater, amount of excitement. All the games were played with each participant, coach, moderators and viewers being at a remote location. We had a record 700+ number of viewers during the finals for Junior and Senior matches of the tournament. A big 'Thanks' to the JAINA Technology team!!!

### First Global JAB Tournament

With the announcement of JAINA Convention being virtual, convener Haresh Shah approached the JAB team suggesting we include other Jain centers worldwide in the upcoming JAB tournament. This task seemed near impossible given the challenges of a virtual tournament, the shortage of time for international centers in preparing for this tournament and the difference in time zones to hold such games. The encouragement from JAINA Convention team and the determination of the JAB team to give this a try, made Global JAB a reality. Special thanks to Sunil Vakharia of New Jersey for helping with Global JAB rules, trial games and matches. For the first time in the history of JAB, international Jain centers such as Veerayatan UK, Veerayatan Kenya, Mumbai University, CSM Kolkata and Jain Society of Toronto took active part by registering one or more teams in Junior and Senior categories combined. These centers had less than five months to prepare for the tournament between registration and their first match. A total of 18 Global matches with 8 game hours were played before the actual convention. The team with highest points in each category advanced to compete with a national team in the Global finals.

### Introduction of the Beginner Category

A Beginner category was introduced during this tournament to encourage participation of Pathshala centers that were new to JAB, so they could have an equally competitive field. We received an overwhelming response with four Pathshala centers registering for the first time in JAB. Being virtual, a consideration was made to also include teams from those centers who had competed in JAB before, but with its participants competing in the tournament for the first time. A total of 11 teams registered in the Beginner category. It was a joy to watch these young participants display their knowledge of Jainism, while having a lot of fun competing in the matches.

### Pre-game and Post-game events

JAB Admin Team conducted five meetings for the coaches between the Beginner, National and Global teams. Harsh Shroff explained the rules and guidelines to the Coaches, and along with Megha Doshi and Siddharth Shah, clarified any questions that they had regarding the matches to better prepare their teams for the tournament. Raj Salecha supported the technical setup.

The JAB tournament usually kicks off with a ‘Meet & Greet’ event prior to the games. Even though this was a virtual tournament, we continued with the same concept. One by one, the coaches proudly introduced their team and each of their participants. The JAB Admin team introduced themselves along with the moderators during our virtual ‘Meet & Greet’ session. We ended this ‘gathering’ with a fun-filled game of Kahoot, before moving on to start the first game of the tournament.

The **Awards ceremony** is always an event that is looked upon by everyone to conclude the JAB tournament. Though we were unable to physically hand out the trophies this year, we had a grand awards celebration event virtually. This was blessed by guest speakers such as Mahesh Wadher, Haresh Shah, Prem Jain, Dilip Shah and Pravin Shah. We also heard from coaches and participants of Global teams such as Dr. Bipin Doshi of Mumbai, Devanshi Dagli of Mumbai Junior team, and Khilna Shah of Veerayatan Kenya Senior team. Although each participant is considered a winner when they enter the JAB tournament and study the vast curriculum of Jainism, the teams that were the winner and runner up of Global, Senior and Junior categories were announced during this Awards ceremony. Here are names of the winning teams:

### Winner and Runner-up Teams:

#### National Senior Winner:

**Jain Center of New Jersey, Caldwell, NJ**  
**Team Name: Purusharth**

#### National Senior Runner-up:

**Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago**  
**Team Name: Om**

#### National Junior Winner:

**Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington, D.C.**  
**Team Name: Dharma Chakras**

#### National Junior Runner-up

**Jain Center of New Jersey, Caldwell**  
**Team Name: Niyati**

#### Global Senior Winners:

**Veerayatan Kenya Seniors 3**  
**and**

**Jain Center of Northern California**  
**Team Name: Anekant**

#### Global Junior Winner:

**Mumbai Juniors 1**

#### Global Junior Runner-up

**Jain Center of New Jersey**  
**Team Name: Arihant**

Please visit the link below to see the list of the semifinalists, as well as the other participating teams of Global, Senior, Junior and Beginner categories.

<https://www.jaina.org/page/AcademicBowI>

### In Conclusion

JAB 2021 was a monumental task being virtual, along with twice the number of teams compared to prior JAB tournaments as well as the addition of Global participation. We were highly inspired to take up this challenge due to the enthusiasm of the participating team coaches and its participants. We wanted to make this tournament happen for the young participants who learn so much about Jainism through its 400+ pages JAB Manual. Continuous support of the JAINA convention team and help from the young moderators, boosted our willingness to accept this challenge. Most importantly, the encouragement from each JAB admin member, their dedication and hard work made this event a reality.

Our sincere and heartfelt ‘Thanks’ to each and every one of them.

## Convention Planning – Session Planning Committee

By Dr. Manish Mehta, Detroit, MI



*Dr. Manish Mehta is an engineer and entrepreneur settled in Ann Arbor, MI, USA, and was educated in East Africa, India, Singapore, and the US. He is a JAINA Director from Jain Society of Greater Detroit since 2004, a past Regional VP of JAINA (2009-13), and currently Chairs the Diaspora Committee. He has been involved with JAINA Diaspora Conferences and Convention Programming since 2009 and was a member of the 2021 Convention Planning Board.*

*Committee Members: Dilip Parekh (Chair, Los Angeles, CA), Dr. Manish Mehta (Co-Chair, Detroit, MI), Dilip V Shah (Philadelphia, PA), Dilip R. Shah (Dallas, TX), Piyush Gandhi (Chicago, IL), Nayan Jain (San Francisco, CA), Raj Kumar Jain (Franklin, NJ), Sharad Doshi (Washington DC), Sapan Doshi (Los Angeles, CA), Mahesh Wadher (Los Angeles, CA), Haresh Shah (Delaware), Dhiman Vora (Ahmedabad, India).*

It was an honor and privilege to work on the 2021 JAINA Convention Board and to Co-Chair the Session Planning Committee with a dedicated team of seasoned JAINA and Jain Center leaders from across the US. I have been involved in JAINA Convention session planning since 2011 and derive great pleasure from working collaboratively through the challenges that each one poses. However, the 2021 Convention planning experience will surely stand out in everyone's memory for the unique and unprecedented circumstances we worked together in.

I enjoy reading and networking widely; and dabble in all kinds of medias, ranging from printed newspapers to magazines and lately, lots of social media. Subconsciously, I am always on the lookout for speakers who have unique perspectives and could be a potential fit due to their demonstrated interests or accomplishments that reinforce Jain values or could inspire our audiences. I enjoy outreach opportunities to engage new individuals, motivating them by forming relationships, and orienting them on JAINA or Jainism's core principles and values.

### Unique 2021 Convention Circumstances

Once it was clear in summer 2020 that the COVID-19 pandemic wasn't going away anytime soon and the many-levels of safety restrictions posed too many risks to organize an in-person Convention, a decision was taken by the Convention Board in September 2020 to hold a virtual convention. The Convenors and Board focused on adapting convention planning efforts towards staging a 100% virtual convention where no travel would be involved.

Our Session Planning Committee's work started when the convention board decided to incorporate the pandemic-survival learnings in the convention theme: **"Jainism: A Resilient Path to Peace."** This very relevant theme was our Committee's driver for screening and recruiting speakers who could motivate and infuse confidence in diverse audiences, especially our youth and the senior citizens – many of whom had remained isolated for long periods. It was also announced that the Convention would be a six-day event from July 1-6, 2021. This required our Committee to come up with engaging programming for nearly 60 hours over the entire US Independence Day holiday weekend, and beyond!

### Session Planning Committee's Responsibilities

The Session Planning committee's many responsibilities included – planning overall schedule of events for the 6 days; discussing with various JAINA committees and community groups about requirements for their events during the convention and allocating them appropriate time-slots and virtual meeting rooms; inviting speakers for the main evening sessions and other enrichment sessions held in the morning; deciding on scheduling speaker sessions with good balance of topics and languages presented each day; scheduling other cultural and religious events; working with speakers to get their videos and bios; informing speakers and meeting leads about the Laaveo platform and their session schedule; assigning committee members and other volunteers to record introduction videos; working with Multi-Media Technology (MMT) team to coordinate efforts in finalizing the speaker session videos to meet the consistency and quality ideals.

How did this compare with prior in-person conventions? In the beginning, it seemed like a virtual convention would be less work as we did not have to worry about food restrictions of speakers, their hotel stay, travel, helping them during the convention, etc. However, finalizing the speech topics, obtaining their speech videos on time, training ourselves for recording introduction speeches, etc., required a lot of communication and coordination. And off-course, it was a tremendous amount work for the MMT team to put it all together with one goal – give the convention attendees a flawless viewing experience!

The main difference in the amount of work done was that all of the work by committees had to be completed well before the convention started. This enabled all of us to enjoy the convention events – sitting at home! In a post-convention meeting, someone commented, “The food was excellent during the convention!” I think this sums up the overall experience of the virtual convention nicely!

### **Dilemmas in Session Planning**

In the initial planning phases, there were a lot of discussions about the type of sessions we wanted to have. Some members felt that since this is the first time we are doing a virtual convention, we should reduce our risk by limiting the number of events planned. Other members felt that *because this was a virtual convention*, we had liberty to add many more types of events. In an in-person convention, availability physical space dictates how many parallel events we can have. This was not an issue in the virtual convention as long as the Laaveo platform had server capacity to support it. And thus, we added more Enrichment Sessions, Tirth Yatras, Virtual Temple, Aarti/Mangal Divo, and also Kids Club which originally was thought as not necessary. The team’s enthusiasm, willingness to take risk and work hard, and respectful dialog among the convention board members and all volunteers made it all happen.

In planning of speaker sessions, we worked with the JAINA leadership to contact the traditional senior Jain spiritual leaders and clergy representing our major sects and groups. Dilipbhai Parekh and I directed committee members to look for exemplary Jains, as well as non-Jains, excelling in businesses, non-profits, government, humanitarian service or those who are high-achievers capable of inspiring our audiences with their wisdom and accomplishments, preferably on topics aligned with the Convention theme to accentuate core Jain values.

We were also cognizant of the need to balance JAINA Convention programming by featuring good representation of Jain speakers from both Digambar and Shwetambar traditions; Jain monks and nuns versus Jain scholars and teachers who were *shravaks* and *shravikas* or practicing professionals; Speakers from North America versus India (or elsewhere); Parallel lectures in English, Hindi and Gujarati; *Aashirwad* speakers for short blessings delivery versus general topic speakers versus subject-matter experts; Gender and age balance as well to reflect the progressiveness of Jains; and Relevance to the contemporary issues/concerns, while preserving our traditional Convention format.

Since personal connection with various speakers was vital, the responsibility of initial contact and follow-up was divided among several members of the Session Planning Committee. This division of labor gave each member an opportunity to strengthen their ties with the speakers as well as distribute the workload.

These multiple-attribute balancing acts were initially not easy, but with open, collegial, respectful, and regular communication within the Session Planning Committee and JAINA Convention/Media team leadership, and by following our virtuous *Anekantvad* principle to promote acceptance and tolerance of all viewpoints, we successfully resolved all programming dilemmas to everyone’s satisfaction.

### **Session Planning Modus Operandi**

Our first Session Planning Committee meeting was held by Zoom in November 2020 from the comfort of our homes followed with 2-hour duration bi-weekly teleconferences until February 2021. During this period, we issued verbal and then written formal Invitations to speakers and assessed whether they had the capacity to meet our deadlines. We also assured speakers that our JAINA team in India would be available to arrange professional video recordings in all major cities. From March through June 2021, the Committee met weekly with many other offline follow-ups and updates – Zoom and WhatsApp *Zindabad!*

The extended pandemic lockdowns and shelter-in-place directives enforced across the world, made it relatively easy to connect with potential speakers both, in the US and India, to obtain their commitments to provide JAINA with original, pre-recorded lectures that would be featured in the Convention sessions. Most speakers were initially more accessible and responsive since the majority had limited mobility due

to health risks posed by the pandemic spikes. Nearly everyone was just a WhatsApp phone call away!

The original plan for organizing a few Live speaker sessions with our revered spiritual leaders in India was abandoned when the MMT expressed that the risk of something going wrong during the convention was too high because of the uncertainties created by connectivity and the COVID-19 Delta variant rampages.

We collectively determined a virtual session model that comprised of one overall Convention Keynote speaker, 10 Eminent Speakers (featuring 2 per day in Main Hall), 30 Breakout Session speakers (lecturing in 6 parallel sessions), 8 Aashirwad speakers by Jain clergy, and up to 20 On-demand speakers. In addition, Youth Sessions, Women's conference, JITO and others had their own speaker sessions.

The virtual aspect of the convention required precise coordination and synchronization of speaker presentations as well as interspersing speakers with traditional mainstay programming such as Jain Academic Bowl, Jains Got Talent, Tirth Darshan, Aarti, yoga/meditation sessions, JAINA Awards, Directors/Committee, Jain Connect, Youth activities, and community-specific meetings, and variety evening entertainment, etc – all were strategically placed within a schedule template based on the California time zone, and yet convenient to online access by audiences globally. This geographically scattered viewership necessitated making all lectures available On-demand to over 7,000 pre-registered audiences from 23 countries, with the majority 6,000 being in the US and Canada.

The Committee worked with the MMT team to issue Aashirwad (5-minute) and Session Speaker (45-minute) Lecture Guidelines for video preparation and specified a timetable for submission of pre-recorded lectures by mid-April (which was then extended to early May 2021). The reason for such early submission was that each video had to be screened for quality, content, and formatted for uniformity to meet Convention norms. About 50% of invited speakers met the deadlines with some extensions being granted until June, but there were several speakers who were affected by the sudden and devastating second spike in Covid cases across India. The uncertainty also delayed our receiving Congratulatory messages for the Convention from both US and Indian Government leaders –eventually, a couple of messages were received at the last

minute, thanks to persistence of our committee members, and the MMT team of volunteers obliged us with integrating into the program despite their own heavy workload!

### Turning Setbacks into Positives

Several senior *sadhus* and *sadhvis* and few other speakers in India contracted Covid in the March-May 2021 “Second spike,” and the imposed local lockdowns delayed dozens of video recordings. We did not have a Plan B for these challenges but decided to work with each clergy's support staff on a case-by-case basis. We also struggled to locate several Jain *sadhus* and *sadhvis* who were confined in small towns and villages, which the JAINA India team could not easily reach. Instead, we worked with the local community hosts and supporters to get acceptable quality videos recorded and uploaded on time. I am amazed with the affordability, robustness, and widespread connectivity of Internet access that Indians now have.

Yet, three eminent Jain leaders could not record their lectures due to closure of their businesses during the pandemic emergency in India. One invited community leader succumbed to Covid in late April just as our Committee was confirming his participation as a speaker. This unfortunate situation prompted us to create a new Hollywood-style “In Memoriam” multimedia presentation honoring the memory of 18 deceased Jains/scholars who had influenced or contributed significantly to Jain diaspora, while raising the attendees' awareness of their extraordinary lifetime accomplishments.

### All's Well That Ends Well!

The stellar results and expressions of satisfaction received from speakers and audiences speak for themselves and made the hundreds of hours of our individual volunteerism worthwhile. We are grateful for the exceptional leadership and initiative taken by Chair Dilipbhai Parekh to keep the committee focused and organized at all times with his exceptional knowledge of IT tools. We are proud that we have set a high bar for session planning and virtual Convention execution, and also humbly recognize there is always room for improvement in future.

We apologize to anyone we may have knowingly or unknowingly offended while executing the session planning activities under some trying circumstances. Michchami Dukkaram!

## Multimedia & Technology Committee

### Conversation with Narendra Maniar and Sapan Doshi

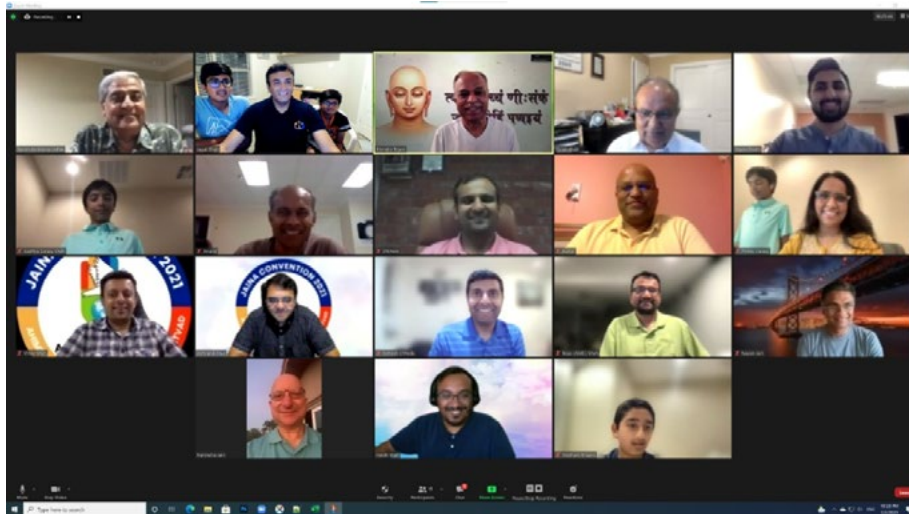


*Narendra Maniar has been an IT Professional since 1971 and holds two master's degrees. He has been a very active member of Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC) since its inception and has served on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in various roles. He has been the team lead for Audio/Video and Information Technology Infrastructure teams at JCSC for last 20+ years providing technical support to several events. Narendra also supported Multimedia requirements for the JAINA Convention in 2009 and 2015. In 2019 and 2021 he was the Chair of Multimedia & Technology Committee. Narendra leads the team by example and communicates effectively at all levels of Management.*



*Sapan Doshi is an active member of the Jain Center of Southern California and has been volunteering wherever help is needed since the age of 10. He is a strong advocate for youth empowerment and co-founded a non-profit organization to teach children leadership skills. Along with his work with JCSC and several other non-profits, Sapan has worked with JAINA and the JAINA Convention for several years. Professionally, Sapan has his own media production and marketing company, Last Minute Media.*

*The 2021 Virtual JAINA Convention has been an amazing experience for the attendees as well as all the organizers and volunteers. Although credit of that success goes to many people who wholeheartedly worked together as one team, one committee that stands out from the rest is the Multimedia & Technology Committee (MMT). Jain Digest team wanted to know more about what went on behind the scenes and how did they manage the monumental task of the virtual convention. In early August, we had a conversation with the committee chair Narendra Maniar and co-chair Sapan Doshi. Here is the excerpt from that conversation.*



MMT Committee Members

**JD:** Welcome, Sapan and Narendrabhai. Thanks for taking the time to tell us more about your experience in working on the MMT Committee during the past several months. In addition to giving our readers an idea about the enormity of this task, we also want to hear about your personal experiences, about your motivation in doing this Seva. Let us start with the technical platform we used for the convention,

Laaveo. What does it stand for? How did you come up with this name?

**Sapan:** We started with “L”, which is the first letter of my company name – Last Minute Media and “A” is the first letter of Dhimen Vora’s company – Arham Technosoft. Then we were wondering what else we could do with these letters. Dhimen came up with an idea to use a Gujarati word “Laviyo” – meaning “I

meaning “I brought something for you”. This fit perfectly since we were bringing the videos on a new online platform to our attendees. Thus, the name “Laaveo” was chosen for the platform.

**JD:** Very interesting and creative! Is this your first deployment of Laaveo?

**Sapan:** We have done about 30 virtual events over the last year, but the JAINA Convention was definitely the first major deployment of Laaveo and all of its capabilities. From every standard, I can say, it deployed perfectly fine. One of the biggest practices we had under our belt was doing Paryushan virtually for the entire week last year. Doing the lectures in the morning and then 12 Pratikramans in one day on Samvatsari over different time zones. So, definitely coordinating all that gave us good preparation to get here.

**JD:** Good training! Really nice. How many employees do you have working on Laaveo?

**Sapan:** We have a team of 4 people here in US and 12 in India – including people on Dhimen’s staff.

**JD:** I know at the beginning of the convention the members of the convention board were evaluating various virtual platforms. When presenting Laaveo to them, what did you consider as important factors that differentiated you from others?

**Sapan:** Both Dhimen and I had been working with JAINA for several years prior to the convention. So, we definitely had more experience with JAINA’s needs and what would really benefit JAINA. During the process of selecting the platform, both of us were helping evaluate some of the other platforms that were presented to us. Some of them were great. But either the cost was too high or sometimes the other platforms were offering these bells and whistles that really wouldn’t benefit JAINA and would make it more difficult for people to use it. Our guiding principle was to build something that is more affordable for JAINA and also has all the essential features without adding all the extras.

For example, in one of the platforms everything was in 3D, and you had to walk around to navigate. Now, as much of a more immersive experiences that it gives, it actually prevents you from making a very user friendly platform, particularly for the seniors and those who don’t understand technology as well. Knowing that, we tried to make ours as simple as possible, as minimal clicks as possible. Another platform that we saw didn’t really give everything you would need to work with it. What Dhimen and I tried to do was to make it as simple as possible for the

attendees and also for the technical people on the preparation side, so that they can just “plug in” what they need and make it work.

**Narendra:** Just to add to what Sapan has said, when we were talking to some of the vendors, it was obvious that they did not quite understand what we wanted for JAINA. Even if we were to choose one of those very robust platforms, they provided us much more than we needed. It would have taken as much time on our part to try and customize it to our needs

**JD:** Yes, the platform was definitely simple to use, and you have added a lot of JAINA specific features. Will those to be part of your standard platform?

**Sapan:** Everything that we did for JAINA will for the most part be offered to people who want to license out Laaveo, but they all will be available as options and in packages. The base package would be just an exhibition hall and an auditorium and people will have the option to add on breakout rooms, help desk, things like that. I think one of the cooler things that we did for JAINA was the entire e-Temple we designed. That was never actually part of Laaveo and JAINA came in April and said, Oh, we have this idea for a new temple. We custom designed this entire e temple and it was a big hit. It had the highest number of views more than anything else on the entire platform. Amazing!!

**Narendra:** I think you can say the same thing about “On Demand” sessions.

**Sapan:** Yes, “On Demand” was the other feature that we had thought about from the get-go. One of the biggest complaints I remember hearing from the Ontario convention was that “there’s so much other stuff going on in parallel and I don’t get to watch all of it.” With On Demand, even if they couldn’t watch it live, they were able to watch it later.

**JD:** Okay! Now let us talk about some of the challenges. What was the most challenging part of whole project?

**Sapan:** Our biggest challenge and concern was getting the content on time. I remember thinking about how quickly we can get the actual content from the speakers to make sure that we have enough time to turn it around. Throughout the entire process that remained, one of our biggest challenges. We did not get some of this content until the first day of the convention! I was like, Oh, well, what are we going to do? We wanted to have all content by the end of April. But by then we barely had 10% of the content. We wondered how we can get the content earlier. By

beginning of June, we had 50% of the content and then finally started getting everything. We definitely were off our timeline.

Another concern was making sure Laaveo performs the way it should and having all the functions ready in time. Because of the pandemic going on in India, we had a couple of team members affected with COVID which really put a stress towards the finish line. That situation definitely was big concern.

**JD:** Were you concerned about having enough server capacity as the number of registrants grew?

**Sapan:** I would definitely say so. That was one of our biggest concerns. Have we set aside the right amount of server space? Did we have everything to accommodate the large number of people that have registered? What do we do if there's a spike in people attending?; and things of that nature. We were planning for all of that. Unfortunately, on day one while we were able to get everyone in for the Aarti, it seemed like we were doing fine; but then all of a sudden, as well as it started up, it came crashing down fairly quickly after that. The first day was definitely a bit of a challenge. Thankfully, with the help of our technology team members Jagat and Tejas and a couple of people working with our Laaveo team closely, we overnight more or less, corrected that. By day two, we seemed to be on the right track to having the system perform well.

**JD:** I think that definitely says that you were prepared. Your team knew what to do. It's just that you couldn't predict when and how a crisis would happen.

**Narendra:** It was really a single failure point, or it may be a design flaw which did not become obvious until it happened. The problem occurred when everybody was trying to access the attendee survey at the same time. By observing what was happening to the server we understood the root cause and then it wasn't difficult to figure out what to do. Luckily, whatever we did to correct the problem worked fine during the rest of the convention.

**JD:** That certainly was a big challenge. Were there any other challenges that you did not expect?

**Sapan:** Yes. The Help Desk. A week before the convention, when the team assigned to work on it was not able to complete the task, our team had to take over. Andy Shah and Vinay Shah took the challenge head-on and within a week they came up with the needed staff, a training manual, and the entire process of how to handle everything. It was amazing to see how well we were able to support the Help

Desk functionality by using email and chat functions - with 3,000 messages each - received from the attendees. The average response time was reduced from 2 minutes to 45 seconds and many of the young team members were handling five chats simultaneously, helping five people at the same time! We also helped people over the phone.

**JD:** That is awesome! Knowing what you know now, are there any lessons learned?

**Narendra:** We were about 2 to 4 weeks behind in communicating how to use the Laaveo platform. In the beginning all the techie people used it without any problem. Only a couple of weeks before the convention we realized that the seniors and other people may not be able to manage it. So, we communicated as best as we could in the short amount of time we had. But then most people did not pay attention to the messages we had sent. For example, to avoid OTP, we had sent a direct personal link to each attendee to get on Laaveo. Many people did not know that.

**Sapan:** Another challenge was that many of the seniors were using older devices, such as a 10 year old iPad that did not support the current video standards. All of us on the techie side did not consider that possibility. If we had a little bit more time, we would have thought through all such little scenarios.

Supporting various mobile platforms also took a lot of resources. One issue was that when publishing the latest version of the mobile app, we were at the mercy of Apple App Store and Google Play Store. They did not approve the current, more stable version of the app and people kept getting the older, less robust version and we got flooded with more questions. In spite of that, a lot of people did use the mobile app and were able to cast it to their TV. It was a popular way of watching the convention.

**JD:** Was there anything that you thought was going to be a challenge, but worked better than you expected?

**Sapan:** Handling various time zones turned out to be simpler. The Help Desk, even though it was a challenge, worked better than we expected.

**Narendra:** The virtual Command Center was setup on a separate Zoom call during the convention to monitor all events which worked very well.

**JD:** During this whole process of getting ready for the convention, what events or incidents would you remember two years from now?

**Sapan:** The biggest thing that comes to my mind is the moment we realized something was wrong during the opening ceremonies. As the events started I was thinking “Everyone's watching the Aarti in real time. This is exciting. Oh my god, there's so many people watching. We're having more people joining than we had anticipated. Everything's going so well.” The excitement was building and all of a sudden, it just crashed down on us. We're switching over to the actual opening ceremony. People are getting kicked off. People can't log on anymore. They're getting an endless looping on the screen. All of us in the background are scrambling. We all are on the virtual command center trying to figure out what's going on. Our entire development team in India is trying to figure out what's going on. The amount of chaos that happened! It took a total of 40 minutes to resolve the entire issue, but for the first 20 minutes our development team was trying to figure out the patch to the solution, how to fix the solution, how to recover everything. It was that 20 minute period I can remember it fresh my mind; thinking this is it! This is what people will remember the most. We're kind of done for. I remember that clear, clear, as clear as day.

**Narendra:** One other thing I will remember is what we had to go through to support live sessions. There were a lot more live sessions than we had expected, such as the interactive zoom sessions. In addition, all sessions in the main hall had to be run as live sessions so that we had control over what we present and when we present. Many of the videos for those had not arrived until the day prior to the event. And for the interactive zoom sessions we had to take people from Help Desk and assign them to the meeting rooms so that they can help and work with the speakers in those sessions.

**JD:** Based on the survey responses, are you planning any improvements? Any lessons learned?

**Sapan:** Yes, We have received many suggestions and we have already started implementing those on the Laaveo platform. We have a list of about 25 points that we are going through. From the future event perspective, the biggest lesson we have learned is having better communication with our attendees and presenters – giving them correct information. If we just had two more weeks, we could have perfected that. The COVID situation also made it very difficult to get responses, get the videos, etc.

**JD:** By looking at how much work you all had to do, it is clear that this was not just another business opportunity for you. You had some kind of passion, dedication to do this. What was your motivation?

**Sapan:** I have been working with JAINA for the past 4 years doing various projects and had personal connections. I got my professional start with JAINA. They were my first client. They really helped me out when I was in a tough spot. So, I saw this as my opportunity to give back to an organization that gave me my start. That is why I wanted to do my best job and help them out by working on the convention and deliver what they needed. Many times, I really questioned; is it really worth all this? During the month of June, I would go home from my office, around three, four in the morning, be home for three, four hours. And by 8am I was back in the office. We were working that way for the entire month of June. It definitely was a challenge to get things done. But my motivation was that it's a good cause. It's something that I'm personally connected to, and something I wanted to see done successfully as a testament to both JAINA and to myself and so we just plowed through and got it done.

**JD:** Will you do this all over again?

**Sapan:** Man, if you would have asked me that two weeks ago, I would have absolutely hands down said NO! I'm still not sure if I would do this again. But with some modifications and changes, I think the end results were well worth it. So, I probably would.

**JD:** I think JAINA will need you since the virtual capability will become part of the future conventions. For many attendees, Acharyas, Sadhu Sadhvis, it was a great way to be part of the convention.

**Sapan:** Yes, in the past we could not include them in the convention due to travel and other constraints. By making this a virtual event, we made a lot of people happy and expand the JAINA brand globally. It came loud and clear in the survey results.

**JD:** Narendrabhai, what was your motivation?

**Narendra:** I just saw the need and thought let me start helping out. But once you step in, you cannot get out! We had three team leads Jagat Shah, Anuj Daftari and Tejas Shah who stepped in and did a phenomenal job. I just had to monitor and be there to answer any questions and guide them; take some of the pressure off and let them do the work.

**JD:** Thank you very much, Narendrabhai and Sapan, for taking the time to talk with me. Hearty Congratulations on a job done so well; with passion and dedication. Wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

## Marketing & Public Relations Press-Media Committee

By Vipul Shah, Chicago, IL



Rahul Jain

*Members of the Marketing Committee: Rahul Jain (Chair), Vipul Shah (Co-Chair), Sapan Doshi (Co-Chair), Savita Jain (Co-Chair), Jagat Shah, Jigar Shah, Deepak Parekh, Shobha Vora, Anya Gandhi, Rajeev Pandya, Dhimen Vora*



Vipul Shah

*Members of the Public Relations Press-Media Committee: Vipul Shah (Chair), Rahul Jain (Co-Chair), Jignesh Jain (Co-Chair), Sapan Doshi (Co-Chair), Hemant Shah (Co-Chair), Dr. Manoj Jain, Savita Jain, Meghna Shah, Jigar Shah, Nidhi Shah, Dhimen Vora*

From very beginning we had decided to combine the Marketing and PR/PM committees as one team. We had our joint weekly meetings where we reviewed what was done in the week and what's planned for the next week. Our team consisted of highly talented graphic designers, message editors, technology experts, public relations champions, professional motivated thinkers, and idea generators.

Here are some major results we achieved as team.

### Public Relations and Press-Media

- Community outreach by connecting with global press-media partners, political leaders, VIPs, other faith organizations leaders, US Jain centers leaders, International Jain organizations, and streaming media partners.
- We built relationships with over 30 Press-Media partners to spread the word around the world for the JAINA Convention 2021.
- We produced periodic press releases for newspapers, Jain Digest, and Jain Avenue on a monthly basis.
- We hosted global press conferences and briefed about the Convention to press-media partners.
- We maintained a registration analysis report to keep everyone updated with the latest registration count and breakout by Jain Centers, state, age group, etc.
- With our persisted approach with community outreach and Press-Media partners, we were able to receive 25 press releases published by various media partners. We also ran advertisements in newspapers and electronic media.
- With our diligent pursuit we received four video messages from following leaders
  - Shri Vijay Rupani, Chief Minister of Gujarat
  - Mr. Raja Krishnamoorthy, Congressman, IL
  - Mr. Tim Ryan, Congressman, OH
  - Mr. Cedric Richmond, US House of Representative and Political Sr. Advisor to President Biden

### Marketing

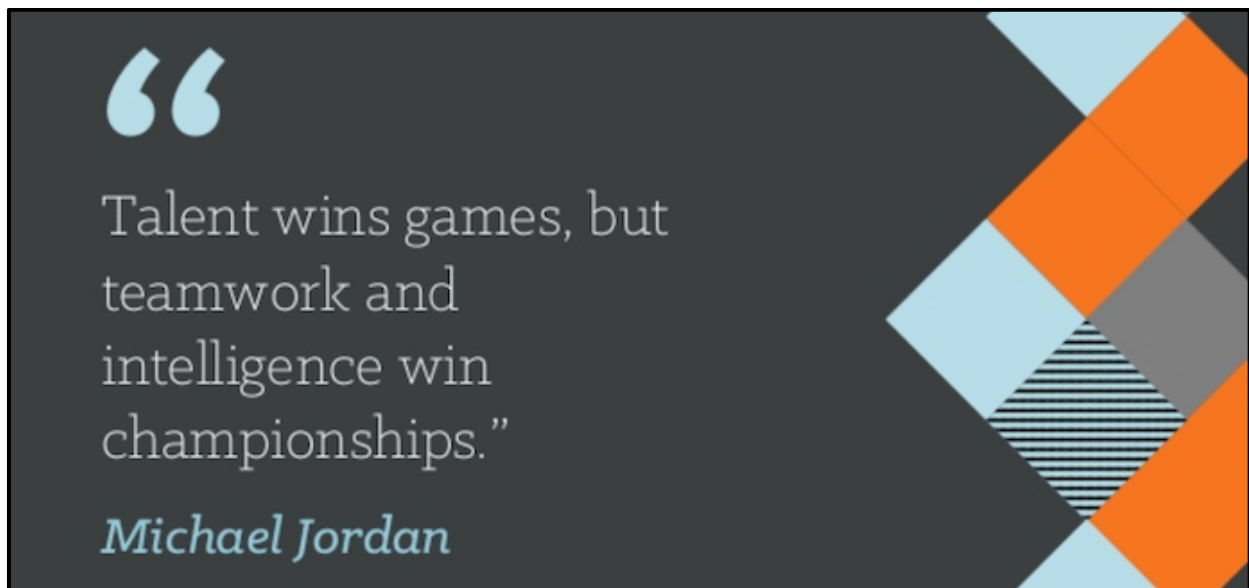
- Helped design convention website.
- Established branding and branding guidelines for the convention.
- Managed social media and email campaigns including communication planning and message editing.
- Graphic designing for hero images, marketing messaging and newspaper advertisements.
- Marketing promotional videos in Hindi and English.
- We ran marketing campaigns through online social media like Google Ads, Bing Ads, Facebook etc.
- We ran weekly WhatsApp messaging campaigns to keep the Jain community around the world fully informed and updated with latest news on the convention.

- **Convention Pulse** was the biggest highlight and highly anticipated messaging tool we invented ourselves. With convention pulse, we sent daily (and sometimes hourly) updates about the convention and upcoming programs to all the participants of the convention. Convention Pulse contributed very heavily in keeping all the participants well connected with the convention. As a result, we had a spike of 6500 simultaneous connections at one point.



## Stronger Together

We experienced true team spirit working together as ONE team between Marketing and PR-PM with brightest, talented, and professional individuals whose goal was to make the convention successful by executing methodically on agreed upon plan. There was no going back once we made the plan and agreed to work on it. Everyone worked like in a concert to bring the harmonious outcome as expected. I personally would love to work with this same team all day long on any project!



## Making of Virtual Jain Tirth Yatra for JAINA 2021 Convention

By Jigar Shah, Pradip Shah, Nayan Jain and JAINA Convention Religious team



*Jigar Shah served as Chair of JAINA 2021 Convention Religious Committee and currently serves as a President of Jain Center of New Jersey (JCNJ). In the past, he has also served JCNJ in the capacity of President, Secretary, Executive Committee, active volunteer and has served JAINA as a director from JCNJ. Currently, he is actively working on a very unique concept of FIRST-EVER BHAV TIRTH for JIN SHASHAN at JCNJ and hoping to conduct Pratishtha in the early half of 2022. For any additional information on Bhav tirth please reach out to him at [jigar.shah@gmail.com](mailto:jigar.shah@gmail.com).*

*The task of creating the First and Unique Tirth Darshan and Aarti Program for JAINA 2021 Virtual Convention was assigned to the Religious Committee. The committee members were: Jigar Shah (Chair), Rajeev Pandya (Co-Chair), Nayan Jain (Project Manager), Darshana Shah, Dhimen Vora, Jayana Shah Paurav Vora, Piyush Gandhi, Pradip Shah, Sapan Doshi, Sharad Doshi, and Shobha Vora. Project was guided by convener Haresh Shah, co-convener Bindesh Shah and JAINA president Mahesh Wadher.*

The stunning success of the first virtual and worldwide JAINA convention 2021 is a product of masterminds of many enthusiastic visionary volunteers. While representing all different aspects of Jain religion and Jain community, the Virtual TIRTH YATRA project was chosen to express our devotion to the Tirthankar Paramātmā. Jain pilgrimage places in India adorned with magnificent temples speak of a vital association with the lives and endeavors of the Jain Tirthankars, who spread the message of Ahimsa, Anekāntavāda, and Aparigraha.



Palitana



Sammet Shikharji

The holy places where the enlightened ones were born, took Dikshā, attained Keval-jñān, and achieved liberation (Moksha) are of special importance. The places touched and traveled by these Tirthankars became famous as sacred places; therefore, idols of Tirthankars are installed there. The religious atmosphere of these sacred places evoke feelings of reverence. Devotional sentiments that permeate throughout, bring inner happiness and peace, and uplift the soul.

It is a well-known fact that the art and architecture of a country are reflective of its religious devotion as well as economic prosperity and generosity of the devotees, without which elaborately carved temples could not have been built. Similarly, the large-heartedness of fellow Jain Shrāvaks from the USA was instrumental in making the virtual Jain Tirth Yatra possible.

Many of us travel to India yearly to express our devotion to the pious Tirthadham. In face of the unrest throughout the world in this pandemic year and travel restrictions, most of us were not able to fulfill our desire of going to India to do Yatra of various holy Tirths.

Hence the JAINA Convention committee decided to showcase a Virtual Bhāva Tirth



*Shrivastanabelgola*

Yatra to nurture our spirituality, thus enabling us to sustain our sense of self and purpose through beliefs, principles, values, and morals.

JAINA 2021 Convener Haresh Shah requested Jigar Shah to lead the effort. At Jain Center of New Jersey (JCNJ), they had led the way in adopting technology in this unprecedented time and had done such kind of Tirth Yatra to include temples from all five continents and special Virtual Tirth Yatra as part of Chaitya Paripati Kartyvya of Paryushan as well as Tirths of Shree Pārshvanāth Bhagawān during Posh Dasami. Current “Bhav Tirth” (Tirthpat &

replica of mulnayank of 24 ancient Tirths of India) project at JCNJ gave distinct advantage in making connection to get permission for getting Photo/Video of pious tirths, narrating detailed history of these tirth and many other aspects of this project; Rajeev Pandya from Jain Center of New York (JCA) co-lead this project and tremendously helped in every aspect of this project; Nayan Jain - Project Manager of this project played a critical role in keeping things together among sponsors, multimedia team and other teams. Every member from Religious committee played a critical role to make this project such a grand success. Committee members started selection of Tirths based on various aspects. The objective was to include various Tirthdhams of all Jain traditions; Shvetāmbar, Digambar and Shrimad Rajchandra. History of the Tirth, popularity of the Tirth and its geographic location were also considered.

Next step was to find a vendor in India who could capture the beauty of our temples in the video along with the vivid narration about the temple. After evaluating six vendors, the team decided to go with one of the best in the industry – Dholakia Studio. Due to the lock down and travel restrictions it was very difficult for the videographer and the team to reach the location and to get permission for filming from the trustees of the temple and local government. Also, the drone photography required permission from the local regulatory authority. Safety of the team was also a big concern. This committee worked with vigor and energy even with time zone differences in USA and India, But with Shasandeva's grace and blessings, all Tirth videos were recorded magnificently.

The Virtual Tirth Darshan and Yatra program was also accompanied by Daily Aarti and Mangal Divo from different traditions. The team worked with renowned artists in India and produced unique soundtracks for each and every aarti/divo which were professionally recorded, edited, and produced. The Aarti videos were recorded by sponsors all over the USA - New Jersey, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Orlando, Phoenix, and other cities.

On the first day we showcased Jain Temples from Northern USA along with never before seen Precious Pratimaji, The Tirth Yatra included following tirths in this 1st phase of JAINA's Tirth Yatra journey: Palitana, Abu Delwada, Nakodaji, Sammed Shikharji, Shrivastanabelgola, Mahavirji, Mahudi, Dholeraji, Girnarji and Agas Kripalu Dev.

JAINA is thankful to donors for taking the opportunity to sponsor Aarti, Divo and Tirth Darshan each day. This Tirth Darshan/Aarti & Mangal Divo project was highly acclaimed and many thousands of members from around the world were able to attend the Bhāva yatra. Based on the result of post-convention survey Tirth Darshan was rated as one of the best programs of 2021 virtual convention.

Even though the project appeared difficult, it was truly amazing to see full cooperation from all members, trustees of each temple, local authorities, and vendors. You can watch this amazing Tirth Yatra by visiting <https://www.jainaconvention.org/2021-convention-contents>

In continuation of this project, the team is now working to make this Tirth Yatra available with English subtitles and is committed to add more tirths helping one to continue with their spiritual journey via Tirth Darshan. If you need more information and would like to sponsor our next tirth yatra then please reach out to Jigar Shah at [jigar.shah@gmail.com](mailto:jigar.shah@gmail.com).

## Cultural Committee

### Conversation with Jayana Shah



*A resident of Los Angeles, Jayana Shah is a Graphic Designer by profession. She is deeply involved with a number of volunteer activities at JCSC, JAINA and many other NGOs. For JAINA, she has volunteered in the Souvenir Committee in 2015, 2017, 2019 (Chair) and 2021, Creative director of the Cultural Program and Religious and Marketing committee in the 2019 Convention and Chair, Cultural Committee and member of Religious and Souvenir committee and board member of Convention for the 2021 Convention. She has been contributing her services to JAINA Calendar and Jain Digest for many years.*

*Cultural Committee Members are: Jayana Shah (Chair), Sapan Doshi (Co-Chair), Ramila Shah, Meghna Shah, and Reepal Shah.*

**JD:** Thanks, Jayanaben, for taking the time to talk with me about JAINA's Cultural Committee. What is the function of this committee and was your role in it?

**Jayana:** The Cultural Committee is responsible for organizing a cultural show at the JAINA Convention. I am the Chair of the committee. With help from other committee members, we decide on the theme of the show, get the community members to participate in the program, review and approve their entries, work with the media and other committees to put the event together.

**JD:** Since this year the convention was virtual, how was organizing the program different this year than previous conventions?

**Jayana:** Let me begin by giving you a background of how a convention show normally works. Typically, when we have an in-person convention, the Jain Center in that location is hosting the convention, including the Cultural show. Naturally, most of the participants in the cultural items are from that particular Jain Center community and members who are attending the convention. For example, in 2019, 16 of 21 the items were from LA because the Convention was in LA area. Another difference is that in the in-person convention people perform on stage.

However, this year because it was virtual, there was no specific Jain Center responsible to put the whole event together. It was really a JAINA function where talents from all across North America were brought together to manage the events. From the perspective of the cultural show this meant that we had an opportunity to get participants not only from Jain

Centers across North America, but also from other countries. Another big difference was that since the convention was not in person, instead of people performing on the stage, we needed get the pre-recorded videos of their performances.

**JD:** Wow! Really a Global event! Sounds like lot more work. What were some of the challenges for you in managing this task?

**Jayana:** One of the main challenges was communication. People were used to the concept of performing on the stage under bright lights and a live, cheering audience. We had to explain to people that they need to consider this a YouTube video or a movie! Then they thought that their performance would be on a live Zoom meeting; and we had to clarify that this will be a recording of their performance that people will watch on Laaveo, the convention platform. Other challenges were related to getting their commitments and reminding them to send their videos on time! We had to put together 4 hours of cultural program in four months; hence the lack of adequate time was a challenge as well.

**JD:** What were the opportunities and challenges for the participants?

**Jayana:** A virtual convention meant that people did not have to travel in order to participate. This was a big plus for the participants. Another exciting thing we pointed out to them was that since this was not an on-stage performance, they could choose any "backdrop" they wanted. They could record their performances in a natural setting such as any internal or external part of temple or well-known monument of

their city! They either could get together in one physical location or have each participant in their group record their own videos and then put it all together. This flexibility was a big plus and encouraged people to participate. 40 centers participated. We had participants from the UK, Australia, India, and of course Canada. One other good thing happened was that a lot of new people of all ages who would generally not have participated got to take part in the performances.

On the other hand, the pandemic, the bad weather, shortage of time and coordination among participants in various locations was a challenge. But people were resilient and found ways to participate.

**JD:** That is wonderful. The performances certainly had a lot of variety. Were there any specific items that you had planned that were unique?

**Jayana:** Yes! There were four categories that were unique this year. 1) Pathshala children showcasing their learning in order to highlight that Jains have held on to their religious roots even while staying away so far from India,. 2) Short videos by various committee members showing how they dealt with the pandemic. This gave an opportunity to many people who normally would be working behind the scenes to showcase their talent. 3) A fashion show – people who could not take part in dance were able to participate from their homes 4) Compilation of short clips of dance from 20+ centers into a 3-minute finale video showing JAIN community as a one community.

**JD:** Very interesting. Similar to the 2019 convention, in this year's convention, the cultural show on both days was a big hit which is a wonderful achievement for your committee. But from 'behind-the-scenes' perspective, what do you consider as achievements?

**Jayana:** One of the biggest achievements was a record number of participation due to the virtual format. It was convenient for a lot of people to make a video. It is otherwise expensive to attend a convention; having to pay for registration, travel, and accommodation. International participation was another big success.

Community bonding was simply amazing. Amateur musicians, camera men, dancers, actors/actresses all came together for this celebration. People came

together like a family and stood as a unified whole. One of the participants shared that after the video shooting of their performance, no one wanted to go home. This cultural program brought them so much joy that they could participate. This was a positive force during the pandemic.

**JD:** What were some of the lessons learned?

**Jayana:** There's always a learning curve. We could have given more time to people. I wish we were able to talk to more people personally because we found out that though we had sent emails, they did not read it and it did not reach the people who really wanted to participate. We could have done a better job at advertising and marketing the whole event for more participation. We could have also better educated people as they were ignorant about the format and hence reluctant to participate.

**JD:** Organizing such an event is long and laborious task. Tell us about your experience and motivation.

**Jayana:** It was an enriching experience that came with challenges and camaraderie. I was part of four different committees and also board. Meeting other people and working with other centers, and committee members helped me bond with people from different centers. Number of meetings that I attended, where ideas bounced off our heads, leaving us with some very rich and unique experiences. In general, I would say taking on new challenges and serving the community always keeps me motivated.

**JD:** During this whole journey, did you and your team practice some of the Jain values/principles? Can you name a few?

**Jayana:** JAINA took precedence over individual needs. Conflict resolution became easier when the bigger picture of serving JAINA was kept in mind. Acceptance came easier by reminding ourselves of Jain principle of Anekantvad. We never lost sight of the big picture. The main goal was to focus on what was best for JAINA. The community was more important than the individual.

**JD:** Thank you, Jayanaben, for taking the time to talk with me. Congratulations on the amazing success!

## Jains Got Talent Committee

By Jayesh Sanghvi



*Jayesh Sanghvi currently serves as a trustee at Jain Society of Houston, TX. He has also served as a Director and President of several Jain Centers in USA. He has served as chair and co-chair of the Jains Got Talent Committee during 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021 conventions. He has been promoting JGT for over 10+ years and successfully delivered excellent programs in the past 4 conventions. He has also served as a judge for JGT and feels that everyone that participates in JGT is a winner!*

*Jains Got Talent Committee Members and their roles: Jayesh Sanghvi (Chair), Janak Rajani (Ambassador, EAST-COAST-USA), Bhupesh Mehta (Judge & Ambassador Liaison – 2021), Sanjay Bhandari (Ambassador, International), Palak Ravi Shah (Ambassador, Youth Group), Dr. Sarika Ziemann (Registration Leader), Samvi Ranka (Judge – Youth Group), Meera (Parul) Shah (Judge 2021, 2019, 2017, 2015), Rekha J Sanghvi (Judge 2021, 2017, 2015), Bela Gandhi (Judge 2021, 2015), Harsh Shah (Technology Leader), Hemen Gandhi (Technology support team member 2021, 2015). See profiles of committee members at: <https://tinyurl.com/fe5hapfk> Some of them have been working with JGT in JAINA for several years and/or have taken part and won in JGT Contest also.*

Jains Got Talent (JGT) is one of the Flagship Crown Jewel Program at the JAINA Convention. It offered our participants a wonderful opportunity to showcase their talent in front of the entire Jain Community on the world stage (First Global level event) during this year's JAINA Convention virtually!

### JGT Process

Anyone who registered for JAINA Convention 2021 was eligible to participate by registering with JGT. Singers, Musicians, Magicians, Dancers, Poets, Video Photographers, Jugglers.. anyone with any talent they wanted to share were eligible to participate. The registrants had to follow an easy 4 step process using online forms and guidelines published on JAINA Website. Registration links were sent via emails and JAINA Newsletters. Once they registered, we had them sent us their Audio/Video content of their performances. We received 85 participants entries (highest ever) in the shortest amount of time within deadline for JGT (Solo/Group) and our technical team and I helped several participants to work within established guidelines to bring us their best performances. The JGT Ambassadors reached out to many with our announcements using multimedia platforms which it made it easier for participants. The participants were young and adults of all ages - from 2 year to 70+ years.

The quality of content was reviewed from technical aspects by the technology team leaders. Our talented and experienced Judges provided their individual input using set guidelines/parameters in judging this year's performances to assure an outstanding JGT program during the Convention. Any participant incorporating the theme of 2021 JAINA Convention "Jainism - A Resilient Path to Peace" in their act, qualified for bonus points towards creativity through Judge's evaluations.

We recognized the top performers by awarding them with plaques and all other participants were also recognized by a wonderful certificate of recognition for their participation. We also recognized our team members, sponsors, and JAINA leadership team for their support throughout the JGT Program.

First time in history, we were able to get over 2 hours divided into two parts over two days during the convention, and we were able to display top 3 performances in each age category within solo and group performances. There were several solo/group entries so close in their ranks, so we chose to include additional performances of selected individuals based on their level of performances under special recognitions

### Recognition by the Community

We received many wonderful accolades and appreciation notes for the outstanding performances, the JGT Team members and sponsors who supported the program. We would like to share with you the excerpts from some of those encouraging messages. We thank each and every one of them..

### Message from our Sponsor - Shri Rajeevbhai Daga and Shri Udaibhai Jain's Families



*"Jains Got Talent has been an integral part of JAINA since its inception. What better way to add entertainment by showcasing our youth's talents?"*

*I would like to commend all the participants on their hard work and congratulate the winning teams on a job well done. We hope this competition flourishes and grows in the coming years so our future generations can enjoy and participate in the competition.*

*Lastly, this whole program wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the dedication of all JGT Team members. My hats Off to everyone at JGT and JAINA team."*

#### **Message from our Sponsor - Shri Anopbhai and Renukaben Vora Family**



*"We watched the Jain Got talent program at the 2021 JAINA Convention and were quite impressed with its content. It was indeed very fascinating to see the JGT participants exhibiting different skills*

*with precision and a gusto of enthusiasm. We need to continue to nurture their talents to bring out their true potential for the benefit of the whole Jain community.*

*Many of us do not realize how many hours it takes to prepare a program of like this. Please remember it does not come by chance. It takes a lot of work, dedication, and persistence. Our hats off to all the selfless volunteers who took the time off their busy schedules and put their mind and soul to bring forth the best from the JGT participants. Their performance would become a life-long pleasant memory for them and for us too. KHUB KHUB ANUMODANA".*

See more messages from attended and Participants at: <https://tinyurl.com/v5e3vnwm>

#### **Our Challenges**

Due to the pandemic situation, we received limited group performances. Being Virtual Convention, the time frame was very short for us to receive participation from many talented individuals. We also had to make sure each performance had good quality audio/video and content that meets JGT guidelines. Several people needed help to understand the guidelines which we shared with them using direct communications. We also needed more time to reach out to many International participants to bring more talent from our international JAIN Community.

#### **Lessons Learned**

Lots of people needed help with making their performance in High-Definition mode (HD, 1080P) being virtual. Audio/Video content was a challenge in some cases where we had to send performances back

to participants to help them bring us wonderful performances by adjusting audio volume and/or video resolution. In future, we will be publishing detail guidelines as to how participants can easily create them.

#### **New Opportunities for JGT Participants**

Due to the international virtual JAINA Convention this year, JGT has received world-wide recognition. This has helped us in building strategic alliances with other international organizations such as **JITO (Jain International Trade Organization)** with presence in 21 different countries. JGT was invited to participate in the TKT (Talent ka Tadka) program conducted during the E-NSPIRE Summit held from August 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> JGT participant Sumanyu Nandecha from Connecticut was among the Top 20 finalists!

We also are working first time ever with **Shemaroo Entertainment Team** in USA to have opportunities for our top performers to work with them in Gujarati films and other programs they conduct. Wow! what a great opportunity for our JGT participants!!

#### **Top Performers**

##### **Solo (Under 18 years) Winners**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Anjal Jain (Dance)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Sumanyu Nandecha (Classical Singing)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Kiara R. Salecha (Classical Dance)

##### **Solo (18 to 34 years) Winners**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Hinal Fifadra (Poetry)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Saumya Maniar (Dance)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Siddhi Jain (Singing)

##### **Solo (35 years & above) Winners**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Pranav Mehta (Photography)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Jatin J Desai (Singing)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Elsa N Shah (Singer/Musician)

##### **Group (Under 18 years) Winners**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Anaya and Archana Nagareshwara (Classical Dance/Play)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Nirjara Akkole, Shayna Jain and Aditi Chougule (Dance/Play)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Siddhi and Labdhi Kapadia (Stage Play)

##### **Group (35 years & above) Winners**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Rekha Shah and Rashmikant Shahgul (Singer/Musician)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Chandra Mehta and Kajal Jain (Dance)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Vibha Vora, Nirali Vora, Pratiti Jain, Ridhi Jain and Trinum Jain (Dance)

#### **Special Recognition Awards were given to:**

Ami Shah, Arjav Akkole, Ashna Shah, Khushi Kawedia, Master Saarth Ranka, Pari Golecha,

Racheet Shah, Rishabh Shah, Shaan Udani, and Vanshika Shah.

Link to 2-minute videos of each winning performer:

<https://youtu.be/43yo8NK72IY>

## What Motivates Us?

What motivates us is the level of enthusiasm and talent hidden in our Jain Community. To showcase that talent, we need a platform within Jain Centers and JAINA. Our team members and I love to work with as many hidden gems/diamonds to bring their talent, our cultural values and heritage through such conventions. We now have the worldwide opportunity under the Virtual Platform with support from JAINA Leadership and Sponsors. Thanks to each and every one of them in helping us support such wonderful cause. Each one of our team members followed Jain Values of respecting participants performances and their hard work to bring us wonderful performances. The judges were required to follow fair and equitable

process we use with a set criteria in judging performances, and they provided highest integrity and ethical standards JAINA/JGT believes in.

In closing remarks for the article, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to each and every participant, their friends, family members, coaches, team leaders, our JGT team, JAINA Program Scheduling Team Leaders, our beloved sponsors and JAINA Leadership Team who helped us a great deal to make this program very successful. Super, superb, achievement we all should feel proud of our culture and heritage...

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to each and every Sponsors, Participants, JGT Team Members and Volunteers helping us bring such wonderful Talents/Treasures within our own Jain Community. Our Team members had to work many long hours to get the final top performances to showcase in the convention. Overall, Outstanding achievements by our team and performers!

## JGT Top Performers



## Doing the Emcee Role in 2019 and 2021 JAINA Conventions

By Savita Jain



*Savita Jain is a writer, singer, choreographer, and an amazing anchor! She volunteers with many non-profit organizations, including JAINA. Savita is a Jain Sutra teacher and has taught many adults and children stotras such as Bhaktamar and Mahaveerashtak stotra. Savita is a chair of JAINA's Public Relations and Media Committee. She also served as a co-chair of the convention's Marketing committee.*

For the second time in a row, I was asked to be the lead emcee for the JAINA convention. After such an incredible experience hosting the convention in 2019, I was thrilled to get this opportunity again. From the moment I was asked, I was incredibly curious about what this year would bring - who would the speakers be? What would they be discussing? However, almost immediately after the planning began, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and we shifted to a fully virtual format.

Now, I faced a new challenge. Anyone who has been on stage knows that the instant audience feedback one gets in the form of clapping or physical reaction, is the most precious reward. But now, with no audience and only a camera in front of me, I would not get that feedback. I fondly remembered being able to see those faces looking up from the first row and how fortunate I was to get a chance to meet the incredible talented dignitaries during the past convention. At that time one of my favorite things was when attendees would recognize me, and in my free time I would get to talk with them about how they thought the convention was going. And often it was nice to just meet them in general.

One challenge that I faced during 2019 convention was that the speakers and times were constantly changing and as a result, my script had to be ever adaptable. I realized that with the virtual nature of convention, everything, including my introduction speeches, was going to be pre-recorded. That meant that I would not have to struggle during the convention and would be able to watch all the events without any stress! As you can see I was in for a completely different experience.

This year it was a long couple of months of convention preparation for our entire family. My husband, Rahul Jain, was the JAINA Convention

Marketing Chair. My daughter was helping with Youth Activities by YJA. Every weekend I was busy helping with Marketing, script writing and video recording. The task of recording was certainly a challenge. When you talk live, sometimes you may fumble over words, or get a little tongue twisted - but then you move on, and it's like nothing happened. But in front of the camera every small mistake is captured, and one has to make sure the videos are flawless. I found myself retaking the videos over and over again to make sure we offer our best to JAINA.

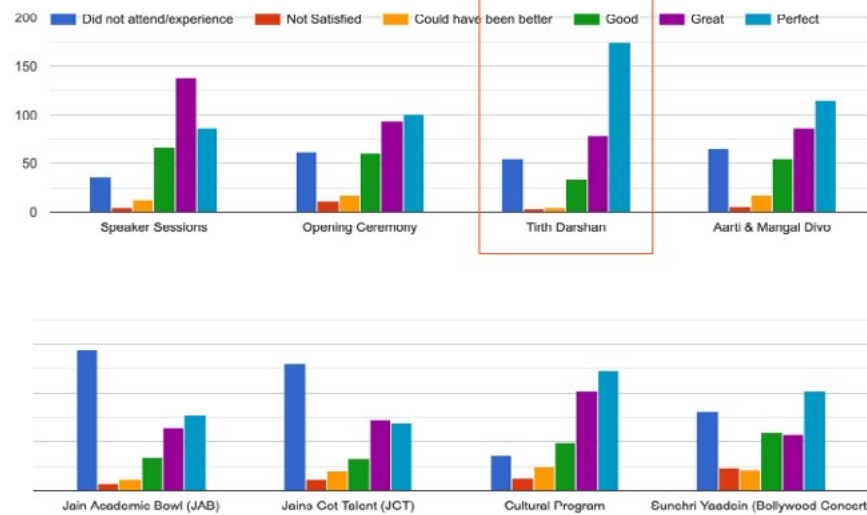
There were many memorable moments during the preparation of the convention, but one unexpected event I will always remember. A week before the convention, when most recordings were done and all that was left was to host the convention itself, we decided to take a quick trip to Atlanta for a few days. However, when we were about halfway there, I got a call from the Session Planning team asking me to make introduction videos for a couple more speakers, including his holiness, The Dalai Lama! Of course, since this was for someone of such a high stature, I knew the videos had to be perfect. Since I didn't have the costumes I needed and no time to write scripts, we took a U-turn and came right back home to Washington, DC, instead of continuing on to Atlanta.

Overall, despite it being a completely different environment, I truly did cherish all the positives, and learning experiences, that came with having this honor. It was a blast getting dressed up, especially since I hadn't gotten a chance to do so since the pandemic struck. Since each speaker I was recording introductions for was on a different day, I'd often had to have around 4-5 costume changes in a day - and I loved it! And above all, I enjoyed getting to spend time with my cameraman - my husband - and hearing his lovely compliments after each recording!

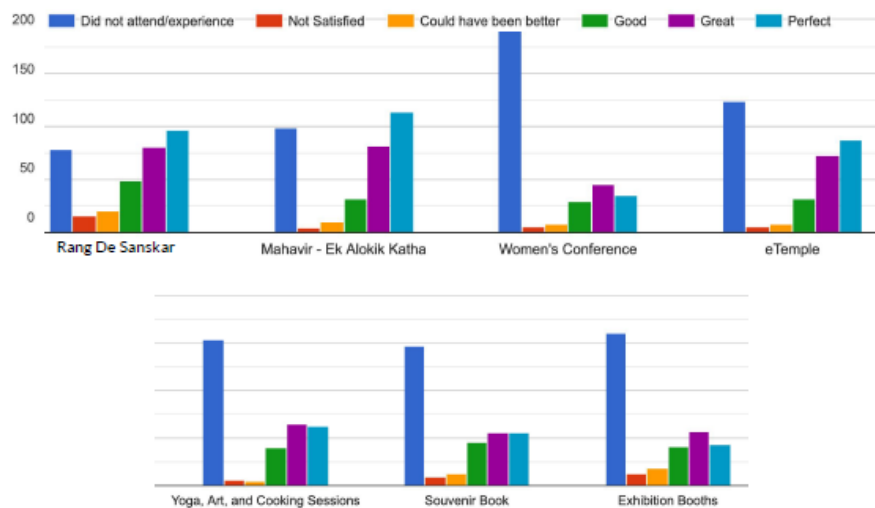
## 2021 JAINA Convention Survey Results

Number of Survey Responses: 380

### Programming Experience



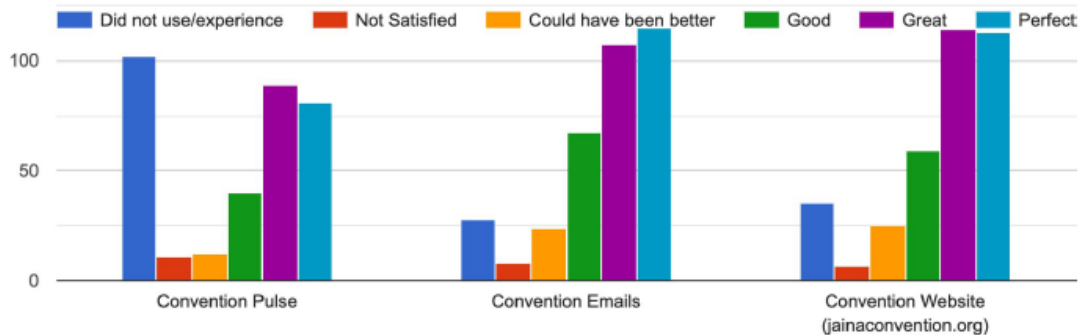
### Programming Experience (contd)



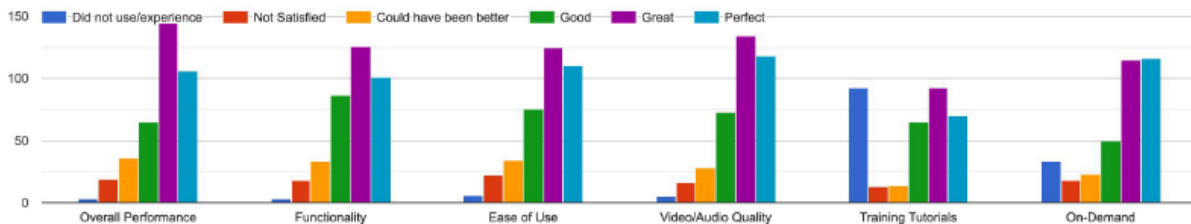
## Marketing/Communications



Your experience with marketing/communications



## Laaveo Experience



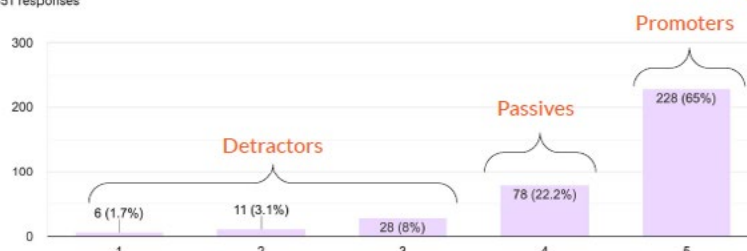
## OVERALL EXPERIENCE



Convention Net Promoter Score (NPS) = **52.2** (65 - 12.8)

Netflix = 68 | Amazon = 62 | Apple = 68

Your overall experience at the 21st Convention  
351 responses



## Convention Attendee and other Statistics

- ❖ Total Number of devices connected during the 6 days of convention: **18,146**
- ❖ The highest number of devices connected : **6,384** on Day 1 (87% of **7,300** registered attendees)
- ❖ The highest attendance for a speaker session: **1,011** for the session "*Let us be careful*" by **Acharya Ratnasunder Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb** on Day 2.
- ❖ The attendance at the peak for Opening Ceremony: **1,692**
- ❖ The attendance at the Closing ceremony was: **864**
- ❖ Highest number of attendees for the evening sessions: **5211** on Day 1 Cultural show
- ❖ Highest number of visitors to single event/exhibit: **4,238** to the eTemple.
- ❖ Best quality videos: Tirth Darshan and Aarti-Mangal Divo
- ❖ Total number of sessions and hours scheduled on Laaveo: **170 sessions / 235 hours**
- ❖ Total number of Live sessions: **43**
- ❖ Total number of Laaveo training videos created: **13**
- ❖ Total number of queries processed via email and chat: **3300**
- ❖ Total number of hours spent by Help Desk team in answering queries: **900**
- ❖ Number of people worked at the Help Desk: **30**
- ❖ The youngest volunteer: **Aditya Shah, age 12**, prepared all scripts for the training videos and assisted at the Help Desk as well
- ❖ Total number of videos and amount of data processed: **550 videos / 2.5 TB data**
- ❖ Largest video file: **22Gb** for "Rang De Sanskar" drama
- ❖ Highest number of views for "On Demand" videos as of July 11:
  - Cultural show Day 2 - 3,322
  - Cultural show Day 1 - 1,774
  - Jains Got Talent Day 1 - 1,760
  - Jains Got Talent Day 2 - 1,440
  - Yoga Session by Bijal Doshi Day 1 - 1,322

## YJA Convention 1994 – First Timers!

By Kosha Udani



*Kosha Udani lives in Morris Plains, NJ. She is a wife, a mother of two boys and a lawyer. She is a second generation Jain and thankful to her family, especially her mother who has brought Jainism to the forefront of her everyday life.*

In May of 1994, I turned 21 years old. Like many other young adults, I felt that I was ready to conquer the world and that wisdom was mine alone. A few years in college and a few one-off experiences in life were all that I needed to have the arrogance of a young adult who was bound for law school. But wisdom does not come so easily! That summer, I boarded a plane from Newark, New Jersey to Chicago, Illinois to attend the very first Young Jains of America (“YJA”) convention.

I did not sign up to attend. Rather, my mother decided that I would go. Like many other decisions in my life that involved religion, she had decided long back that it was her role (or rather duty) to ensure that Jainism was at the center of my life. I travelled to Chicago with my good friend Namrta. I did not have any expectations. Why? Simply because I looked at those few days over the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday of the convention as way to leave town, fly on a plane alone with a friend and a mini-vacation. I did not research what the convention offered, who would attend, or really have any role in the process.

Even now over 25 years later, I remember being picked up at the airport by a Jain convention volunteer – a local parent in the Chicago area who had signed up to transport us kids to the convention hall. Jostling in the back seat, among other Jain kids from across the country, I did not realize at the time how special this would later prove to be. The first YJA convention in North America was an event that would help shape my life going forward.

The few days of the Jain convention were filled with activity. There were ice breakers with other young Jains from across the country – the kind of ice breakers that make you cringe – “What is your favorite flavor of ice cream” – but we laughed and got to know each other. There were many break out sessions where for the first time, I realized how we as young Jains were a *community*. Growing up in central New Jersey, of course I had other Jain friends, we all did. But seeing the scope of youth from across the country was eye opening. Today, the number from 1994 seems so small; the Jain community and its youth

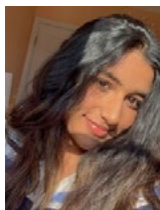
have increased in multiples in the last 25 years. It was so refreshing to be with other young adults where we could freely talk about being vegetarian without being asked that quintessential question – “If you don’t eat meat, what do you eat?” We all stayed in local hotels, roaming the halls, getting to know one another not only as Jains but as friends. The keynote speaker of the convention was the revered Chitrabhanuji. Until that time, Jain lectures were something my parents attended, not me. But I listened intently, focused on his words, and on how I could incorporate Jainism into my everyday life as an individual, as a future wife, mother and professional. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced. On the last night of the convention, there was a DJ and we all danced the night away before leaving for our flights the following morning, tearfully hugging and exchanging phone numbers and promising to stay in touch from our shared conversations and ties of Jainism that continue to run deep.

Thirteen years later in 2007, after I was married (to a fellow Jain!), my sister attended a Jain convention and met her future husband. Today, my 15 year-old son Shaan is a local Mid-Atlantic representative for the YJA. I am surprised at how proud I am to write that. COVID-19 has forced YJA meetings to be on Zoom and I try to eavesdrop every chance I can. Hearing these young kids laugh and talk and have this commonality of the Jain religion is awe inspiring and reminds me of that convention weekend so many years ago.

The other day Shaan asked me if I would let him go to the YJA convention which is scheduled for the summer of 2022. I just stared at him. I told him that your mother went to the very first YJA convention. Like most teenagers, he ignored me and asked what that had to do with anything. But the significance is overwhelming. I can’t wait to drop him off at the airport next summer to start this journey of meeting other young Jains in person so that they too can talk, laugh, learn about Jainism and exchange phone numbers (they will most likely just text and Snapchat each other!). The legacy continues...

## Learning to be Compassionate at Luvin Arms

By Mihika Shah



*Mihika Kunjal Shah is from Doylestown, PA. She is a first-year student at the University of Pittsburgh studying neuroscience. She enjoys hiking in her free time and has danced to Bollywood tunes since the age of 7.*

It's a stifling July afternoon and I can feel beads of sweat forming on my forehead as I walk to the big barn of the sanctuary, hoping to get some refreshing shade and quality time with the residents – the term used by Luvin Arms when speaking of the animals. I swing open the gate of the sheep pen to be greeted by Jared rubbing his head against my leg not so secretly telling me he wants to be pet. I soon find myself in a sea of wool as Lexie and Finn come over for scratches and cuddles as well.



*Cuddling with Finn*

In my peripheral vision I spot Teddy a few feet away laying down by the fence, and I smile knowingly. Finn and Teddy never leave each other's side – even when there's a fence between them. They're best friends, loving and protecting each other just as we humans care for our loved ones as well. Teddy is a 3-legged sheep and when he is most vulnerable, such as while using the restroom, Finn acts as his personal bodyguard, standing between us and Teddy while showcasing the unconditional love they have for each other. Unlike most of the residents at Luvin Arms, Jared, along with his two sisters Jackline and Lexie, was born on the sanctuary after his mother, Maxine, was rescued while pregnant. They've never experienced human cruelty; they're the lucky ones.

This past July, my friend Mansi and I were fortunate enough to get to volunteer at Luvin Arms for two

weeks. Luvin Arms is centered around the principle of Ahimsa; the ethical belief that we must not harm any living beings. Founded by Mr. Shaleen and Mrs. Shilpi Shah in 2015, Luvin Arms is a farmed animal sanctuary that rescues farm animals who have experienced abuse, trauma, and neglect previous to coming to the sanctuary. Many were on their way to slaughterhouses, such as Tito the cow, – he gives the best hugs – while others were abandoned on farms covered with barbed wire and broken glass, such as Milo the cow.



*Having fun with Tito*

The sanctuary is currently home to 117 residents, with hundreds more having been rescued and relocated to various other sanctuaries as well. Each resident tells a heartbreaking story of animal cruelty, serving as a reminder of all the suffering still yet to end.

It's an incredible sight to see the residents transform into who they truly are and learn to trust humans again despite their traumatizing pasts. However, it's not an automatic change, it takes a multitude of patience and cooperation for the Care Team to rehabilitate these distressed individuals. In my two weeks of volunteering on the sanctuary, I was working alongside the Care Team, helping to feed, clean pens, care for, and most importantly give love to all of the residents. They never failed to make my days interesting and filled with laughter. The task of

cleaning out the turkey pen led to a conversation between me and the Tea Girls (a group of turkeys all named after flavors of tea) consisting entirely of very bad attempts at turkey calls by me. Feeding and applying sunscreen to the pigs ended in Ophelia rubbing her ears – and consequently all her sunscreen – on my legs leaving me to chase her down to reapply more. Spraying fly repellent on the cows resulted in Samantha showering me with kisses.



*Ophelia standing tall*



*Sharing a laugh with Samantha*

The love and affection the residents display is directly related to the hospitality of the sanctuary and all those who work there as well. From the moment we arrived,

we were welcomed to the sanctuary with open arms. Shaleen Uncle and Shilpi Aunty made us feel right at home from taking care of our living situation as well as often making our meals. The Executive Director, Ms. Shartrina White, could not have been more kind. She radiates compassion. She looked after us as any mother would care for their own child and was more than willing to let us stay with her for the two weeks.



*Posing for a picture with Alfie*

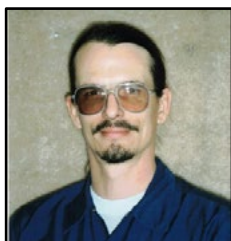
In addition, the care team of the sanctuary truly fits the name. Not only are they a team of individuals who dedicate their time and energy to caring for the residents day in and day out, but they transfer this act of caring onto people as well. The care team includes some of the most compassionate people I have been lucky enough to meet. They embody the best of people.

The two weeks Mansi and I spent at Luvin Arms was unlike any other experience we have ever encountered. It taught us how to be more patient and understanding, how to be more responsible, and how to be compassionate to all individuals, regardless of species, all while having the most fun we've had in our entire lives. So, the next time you drive by any farm, after seeing them and shouting "Horsies!", rather than wishing to play with the cute animals you just saw, come to Luvin Arms to do the same. Here you are not only able to give love to the residents but receive love from them as well – Samantha showed me so much love I even became her sponsor. Love keeps the world together, and Luvin Arms is filled to the brim with it.

# TRANFORMATION

## Conquering the Sense of Separateness from The Divine

By Patrick Barnes



Patrick Barnes is a retired Automotive Technician currently residing in Ogden, Utah, USA. He has been blessed with 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren. He is an avid reader since his youth and is possessed of (and by!) an extensive library containing works on such subjects as; History and Anthropology, Philosophy and Metaphysics, Gnosticism/Mysticism and Comparative Religion. He is a member of Yogananda Paramahansa's Self Realization Fellowship, JAINA, and The Order of The Cross, ([www.orderofthecross.org](http://www.orderofthecross.org)) - an informal Mystic/Gnostic Christian fellowship founded in 1904 by the Rev. John Todd Ferrier (1855-1943) in London, England, that embraces reincarnation as a reality and is vegetarian & pacifist.

**[Editor's Note:** This article outlines the salient attributes of the spiritual process of self-realization. One has to overcome the attachment and aversion which arise out of sensual pleasure and the wrong belief that 'the outer personality is my true identity'. Desire arises out of the wrong belief that material wealth and sensual pleasure will give us true happiness. Any kind of desire will keep our mind extroverted and not allow us to go within.

When we develop equanimity we stop judging objects, individuals or happening. We simply accept them as they are without our personal bias. If we focus our attention on inner dialogue, that is, the underlying inner thought process, we will be able to realize that our attachment and aversion are a hindrance to going deeper within and realizing our true identity. The more attention is focused deep within, the more likely that we will hear the 'anahat naad'- the melody of true self.

Only when we withdraw our focus on external events being projected on our knowledge mirror (gnan upyog), will we have the glimpse of 'True Self'. The knowledge mirror and true-self are inseparable one entity - the 'true-self' being the substance - the 'Being' and gnan upyog as its attribute. It all boils down to whether we focus our attention on external happenings or on the 'knower' of the happening. The focus on the happenings implies the presence of 'personality - limited self - ego'. The focus on the 'knower' invokes the spiritual journey that will lead to realizing 'true-self', experiencing joy and bliss.]

If one is to truly overcome the attachment to the senses and therefore achieve release from Samsara (birth, death and rebirth), the attainment of a state of nirvikalpa (without difference) samadhi (serenity) is necessary to fully realize his/her identity as a Spirit.

### Circumspection of Practice

Although aspects of practice may vary from individual to individual, it must be observed that certain aspects are ideally indispensable. "Freed in all his works from

prickings of desire, burned clean in act by the white fires of truth, to that one who is 'soul centered', grief and joy sound as one word, his deep-seeing eyes view the clod, the marble, and the gold as one; whose equal heart holds the same gentleness for the lovely and unlovely, firm set, well pleased in praise and dispraise, satisfied with honour and dishonour; unto friends and foes alike in tolerance. One who, abandoning desires which shake the mind, finds in this action, full comfort for his Soul. In sorrows, not dejected, and in joys, not over-joyed; dwelling outside the stress of passion, fear and anger; . . such an one bears wisdoms plainest mark." (From the ideal of the Indian Vidya)

From the Upanishads: "Kill out sensation, look alike on pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat."

"Seek shelter in the Divine alone, destroy the sense of separateness", repeats Krishna in every form.

Says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "He who is engaged in the performance of Yoga (union), who has concentrated his mind in me (Krishna), such Yogi's all the Siddhis (psychic faculties) stand ready to serve. He who would hear the voice of Nada, the 'Soundless Sound,' and comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of Dharana." (Dharana is the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some interior object (the Atman, or Brahma), accompanied by complete abstraction from everything pertaining to the external Universe, or the world of the senses.

### Preparation

Although it is essential that the intellectual and intuitive faculties be prepared to receive the intelligence (the Mystic message) with understanding, when the time arrives for that experience mystically known as 'the voice of the silence', the heart and emotions, the mind, and its intellectualisms have to be put aside. The mind and its intellectualisms have to be put aside, for a time, "so that the disciple can

obtain a truly pure silence." In the early state in which man is entering upon the silence, he loses knowledge of his friends, family, of all who have been near and dear to him; and also loses sight of his teachers and of those who have preceded him on his way. This is explained because seldom one passes through without bitter complaint, but it need not become a hindrance on the path. Your teacher, or your predecessor may hold your hand in his, and give you the utmost sympathy the human heart is capable of. But when the silence and the darkness come, you lose all knowledge of him; you are alone and he cannot help you, not because his power is gone, but because you have invoked your great enemy. The great enemy is yourself. If you have the power to face your own soul in the darkness and silence, you will have conquered the physical or animal self which dwells in sensation only.

### The importance of personal responsibility

Man, when he reaches his fruition, and civilization is at its height, stands between two fires. Could he but claim his great inheritance, the incumbrance of the mere animal would fall away from him without difficulty. But he does not do this, and so the races of men flower and then droop and die and decay off the face of the earth, however splendid the bloom may have been. And it is left to the individual to make this great effort; to refuse to be terrified by his greater

nature, to refuse to be drawn back by his own material self. Every individual who accomplishes this is a redeemer of the race. He may not blazon forth his deeds, he may dwell in secret and silence; but it is a fact that he forms a link between man and his Divine part; between the known and the unknown; between the market-place and the snowcapped Himalayas. He need not go about amongst men in order to form this link, in the Astral he is that link, and this fact makes him a being of another order from the rest of mankind.

### Conclusion

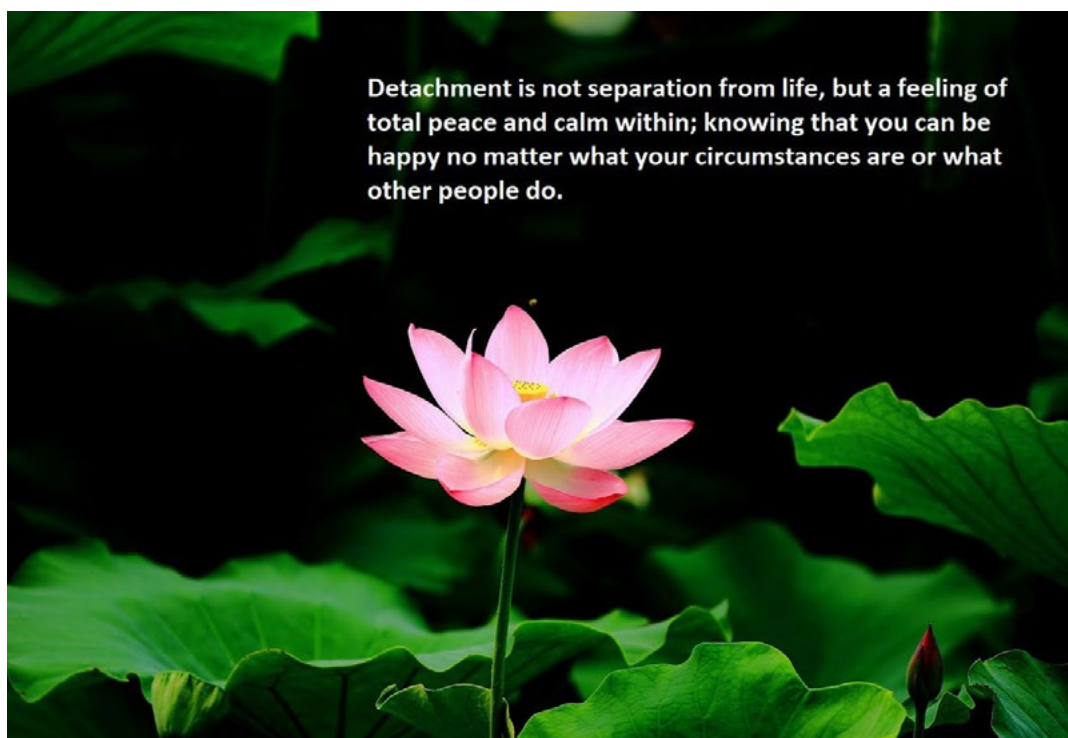
As the silent soul awakes, it makes the ordinary life more purposeful, more vital, more real, and more responsible. The disciple who has withdrawn into his own citadel has found his strength; immediately, he becomes aware of the demands of duty upon him. As soon as he is safe from the vibrations of life and can stand unshaken, the outer world cries out to him to come and labour in it. So with the heart. When it no longer wishes to take, it is called upon to give abundantly.

### Sources:

*"The Message of Plato"* E.J. Urwick

*"Light on the Path"* Mabel Collins

*"Mara: Star of the Sea"* Jane (Miller) Fisher



## Shri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya

**Authors: Mukesh Mehta, Secretary, SMJV Mumbai, Hitesh Doshi, Secretary, SMJV Mumbai, Bipin Shah, Comm. Member, SMJV, Vadodara, Divyang Shah, Comm. Member, SMJV, Vadodara**

*Shree Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya, an unparalleled legacy of nurturing values, established 106 years ago with the blessings and inspiration of P. P. Acharya Vijay Vallabhsurishwarji M.S., has over 200,000 alumni spread across the globe and is making the alma mater proud. This article provides information about its journey and its fast expansion spree.*

### About SMJV



Way back in 1915 when there were quite conservative thoughts prevailing in the society, a revolutionary far sighted Jain saint, named Punjab Kesari P. P. Acharya Vijay Vallabhsurishwarji M.S, realized the need to have a supporting system for students willing to pursue higher studies but were unable to do so either due to financial constraints or due to unavailability of cultured accommodation to stay while studying. Despite protests from the many corners of the society, he firmly went ahead and inspired the foundation of a legacy called Shree Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya for this noble cause.

The Trust started with its first facility at Gowalia Tank in Mumbai housing merely 50 students. The focus was to support these students in pursuing their professional studies comfortably and at the same time nurturing religious and cultural values in their lives to create stalwarts of the future Jain Shashan.

With blessing of Dev, Guru and Dharma and very thoughtful administration by the hardworking founders of the Trust, the organization has grown multifold today and has gifted gems to the society not just in form of established, successful, and leading Jain Shravaks; but also 4 Acharya Maharaj and 30 Sadhu/Sadhvi Maharaj, who are all very grateful to their mother institute and willing to offer their best for the progress and prosperity of their beloved alma mater.

### Vision of SMJV

- To realize Gurudev's vision of providing Education to all needy Shwetamber Murtipujak Jain Boys and Girls free of cost or at minimum fees.
- To prescribe/revise courses for Religious Education to students and provide facilities for the same within hostels.
- To provide Loans/Scholarships to needy students pursuing College and Higher Education

### Mission of SMJV

- To provide Lodging and Boarding facilities of Best Standards to the Shwetamber Murti Poojak Jain Students.
- Focus on Welfare and Progress of students.
- Keeping in view demand for accommodation at important Education Centres, open more Branches of Vidyalya for Boys and Girls.
- Thrust on imparting Religious Education to and performance of Jin-Puja by all students.
- To compile, publish and spread Jain Literature.
- To maintain and run Jinalayas at all Branches.

### Professional Management



The SMJV Trust has been very successfully led by prominent Jains from time to time. In this legacy, presently Shri Sudhirbhai U. Mehta, son of the philanthropic Shri U. N. Mehta family and presently the Chairman

and M.D. of Torrent Group of Companies, is the Chairman of SMJV Trust. Under his able leadership and keeping in view the need and expectation of the students in today's time, the total transformation of all the existing facilities into ultra-modern comfortable residential housing is under way. Simultaneously, with support of the professional alumni in the hierarchy, implementation of very professional work culture

with maximum use of Information Technology is also under way.

### SMJV's Existing Network

SMJV is providing accommodation to over 2000 students from its 12 ultra-modern facilities, including 8 Boys hostel and 4 Girls hostels spread in Three states of India.

### Overall development of the Students

Along with their core studies, SMJV strives to imbibe all round skills in the students to ensure success in their career. With this vision, many student development activities are being carried out at SMJV. These include in-house and external Personality Development seminars, Leadership activities, English proficiency and communication skills, Computer skills, other specialized courses, and lectures by professionals of different disciplines.

### SMJV's maiden Direct Education Initiative



In year 2009, SMJV ventured into its first ever Direct Education Initiative in form of CKSVIM – C K Shah Vijapurwala Institute of Management. The institute has progressed remarkably in its existence of a decade and is among the top ranking Management Institute in Gujarat, India. Its MBA program is Accredited by ACBSP, USA and has number of accolades to its credit. Please visit [www.cksvim.edu.in](http://www.cksvim.edu.in) for more details.

### SMJV – The Donors' Choice

The dedication, integrity, and efficiency with which the SMJV Management has nurtured the institution and has executed its various development projects till date, SMJV is today one of the most preferred Donors' choice, be them its Alumni or the society as a whole. Though there are hundreds of donors

in last century who laid a strong foundation for progress of SMJV, and every donation is great in itself and invaluable always, some of the remarkable donations in recent times are :

- Donation of over Rs.25 Crores by Shri U. N. Mehta family by hands of Shri Sudhirbhai Mehta for New Ahmedabad Boys Hostel
- Donation of Rs.9.5 Crore as main donor, for the recently completed new Boys hostel at Vadodara, by Dr. Jasvantbhai Modi, A philanthropic Alumni of SMJV from California, USA.
- Another donation of Rs.13 Crores by same Dr. Jasvantbhai Modi towards the Main Donor for the upcoming campus for Boys and Girls hostel at Surat.

### Forthcoming Project at Surat

SMJV is very soon going add two more ultra-modern facilities at a prime location in Surat under its arm viz. a Girls' Hostel in over 30,000 Sq Ft comprising of 40 Rooms to accommodate 120 Girls and a Boys' Hostel in over 25,000 Sq Ft comprising of 32 Rooms for 96 students.

### Forthcoming Project at Bhavnagar

Bhavnagar is fast becoming the education destination for many students from Saurashtra, Gujarat.



SMJV is also poised to transform its existing hostel at Bhavnagar by re-building it into a beautifully designed infrastructure where all convenience could be provided to the students. There are donation opportunities here too. Prospective donor could link his / her / family's name as a main donor just for about \$600,000 or even contribute by booking a Trust seat just in \$25k.

### Forthcoming Project in Pune

Huge expansion of SMJV's Boys and Girls hostels at Pune are also in its advance stage. The 8 storied state-of-art facility to be built in approx. 11,500 Sq Yards area would comprise of 131 Rooms to house 393 students. Phase I is already in progress and the next will follow soon. Reach

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out to SMJV to explore opportunities of association.



### SMJV Higher Education Loan Scholarship Scheme for All Jains

SMJV aims the betterment and upliftment of the entire Jain society by supporting Jain boys and girls to pursue higher education. Need of funds should not be the limiting factor. And hence, SMJV's Interest free Higher Education loan is available to All Jains, i.e., any Jain from all four sects. Till date SMJV has supported 2700+ students thru this scheme and is marching further, but the demand for such support is 10x more. SMJV requests donors to come forward and contribute to their best for this noble cause. SMJV offers Trust seats of Rs.11 Lakh each, for this scheme. The Donor can donate the amount in three instalments if so desired. The name of the said Trust Seat will be given as per the Donor's recommendation. The Donor can recommend One Student in One academic year up to 30 years, after full payment. Presently SMJV gives maximum Rs.3 Lakh as per the set norms and approval process. All recommendations shall be considered

Here is a great opportunity for prospective donors to be a part of this SMJV initiative and fulfill their desire of giving back to the community. SMJV shall ensure that your every penny is utilized very carefully. A team of professional alumnus are handling the project who are very enthusiastic to ensure this project to be a feather in the cap of their alma mater.

as per prevailing rules and availability of funds from time to time. For further details reader can reach out the office bearers of IAAMJV [www.iaamjv.org](http://www.iaamjv.org) in USA or SMJV in India or can also be availed from [www.smjv.org](http://www.smjv.org)

### IAAMJV – International Alumni Association of SMJV

SMJV is proud to have thousands of Alumni very well settled in the entire world and many of them in North America. Similar to many Alumni associations across India and its federation spearheading its activities, IAAMJV is a platform connecting the Alumni fraternity in USA with the Alma mater and becoming instrumental in supporting SMJV in its various projects from time to time. SMJV heartily appreciates their efforts and affection.

### SMJV CONNECT – Connecting Alumni to Alma mater

To connect with all their past and present students on a single platform, SMJV has initiated a unique portal which presently have 4000+ members and fast increasing. The features of SMJV Connect portal include SMJV News, Networking, Powerful Search Engine, Giving Back, Publish Articles, Monthly Digest, Jobs and Internship, B2B Directory, Events etc. To register click on <https://Alumni.Smjv.Org/>

## DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

| Name of Donor of Sankul / Campus                         | Name of Donor of Girls Hostel            | Name of Donor of Boys Hostel            | Trust Seat Donor                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rs. 13 Crores<br/>\$ 1.81 Million</b>                 | <b>Rs. 10 Crores<br/>\$ 1.39 Million</b> | <b>Rs. 8 Crores<br/>\$ 1.11 Million</b> | <b>Rs. 18 Lacs<br/>\$ 25,000</b>                                                      |
| Name will be displayed at Main entrance of Hostel Sankul | Name will be displayed on Girls Hostel   | Name will be displayed on Boys Hostel   | Eligible to recommend 1 student for Hostel admission per Trust Seat Valid for 30years |
| Eligible Trust Seats 7                                   | Eligible Trust Seats 5 in Girls Hostel   | Eligible Trust Seats 4 in Boys Hostel   | Available seats: 39 for Girls Hostel & 31 for Boys Hostel                             |
| <b>4 in Girls' Hostel<br/>3 in Boys' Hostel</b>          |                                          |                                         |                                                                                       |

Donors may give different names of their choice either family member or Ancestral name to put at Hall, Kitchen, Library, Sports and Activity room etc.  
Photo of their choice at appropriate place may be placed.  
Name to mention for 30years on respective hostel letter heads and all stationary items.

To know more about SMJV's legacy, activities, and opportunities of association, please visit [www.smjv.org](http://www.smjv.org)

# A List of Educational Vegan Documentaries

Compiled by Hema Pokharna

(Source: <https://nutriciously.com/best-vegan-documentaries/>)

## **Dominion (2018) - full documentary [Official]**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQRAfJyEsko>

(Best animal documentaries showing how terrible animal agriculture is. Caution: Graphic violence)

## **The Game Changers**

<https://www.netflix.com/title/81157840>

(Meeting visionary scientists and top athletes, a UFC fighter embarks on a quest to find the optimal diet for human performance and health.)

## **What the Health**

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80174177>

(This film examines the link between diet and disease, and the billions of dollars at stake in the healthcare, pharmaceutical and food industries.)

## **Forks Over Knives**

<https://tubitv.com/movies/557399/forks-over-knives>

(Researchers explore the possibility that people changing their diets from animal-based to plant-based can help eliminate or control diseases like cancer and diabetes.)

## **Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret**

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80033772>

(Learn how factory farming is decimating the planet's natural resources -- and why this crisis has been largely ignored by major environmental groups.)

## **Eating Animals**

Watch on Netflix, Hulu, IMDB, etc.

(An examination of our dietary choices and the food we put in our bodies. Based on Jonathan Safran Foer's memoir.)

## **Peaceable Kingdom: The Journey Home**

[http://www.tribeofheart.org/sr/pkj\\_english.htm](http://www.tribeofheart.org/sr/pkj_english.htm)

(Can a change of heart change the world? Two animal rescuers, five farmers, and a cow named Snickers will make you laugh and cry, expand your consciousness, and challenge your ideas about who animals are. Open your eyes. Trust your heart. Take the journey.)

## **Unity**

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/unity>

(100 celebrities narrate this enlightening documentary that re-examines the interconnectedness of all life on Earth, ponders our place in the universe.)

## **73 Cows**

<https://vimeo.com/293352305>

(73 Cows is the story of Jay Wilde, a beef farmer who battles with his conscience every time he takes his cows to slaughter. Feeling trapped within an industry he no longer believes in, Jay knows he must make a change and do what no other farmer from the UK has ever done before.)

## **The Ghosts in Our Machine**

<https://www.theghostsinourmachine.com/watch-now/>

(A cinematic documentary that illuminates the lives of individual animals living within and rescued from the machine of our modern world.)



**Virtual Tirth Yatra - JAINA Convention 2021**